



# Islamabad POST

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**UAE Ambassador hails the strong UAE-Pak relations**

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**Sweden happy in business friendly environment**

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**1m doses to be made available in March: Faisal**

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## Briefs

### Joe Biden sworn in as President

DNA

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden on Wednesday assumed office as the 46th president of the United States. He has assumed the helm of a country reeling from deep political divides, a battered economy and a raging coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 400,000 Americans. With his hand on an heirloom Bible that has been in his family for more than a century, Biden took the presidential oath of office administered by US Chief Justice John Roberts just after noon (1700 GMT), vowing to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

### Broadsheet case exposed corrupt mafia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz said on Wednesday that the Broadsheet case has once again exposed the corrupt elements. In a tweet, he said that this case was a reminder of how the national interest was compromised for personal gain. Those who ruthlessly plundered the national wealth must be held accountable, he said. Shibli Faraz remarked that if in the past, these corrupt elements were not given NRO, the country would not have suffered so much.

### Siraj for decisive Kashmir policy

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Reminding the rulers that nation would not tolerate any surrender before New Delhi on Kashmir, Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Senator Sirajul Haq has urged the government to devise a decisive policy for the freedom of the occupied area from India. "Surrender on Kashmir will be tantamount to sell the country's sovereignty and stability to New Delhi. Kashmir is jugular vein of Pakistan," he said while chairing a meeting of JI AJK Majlise Shoora.

## Pak desires to deepen its ties with EU

The luncheon hosted by the Foreign Minister provided an opportunity to both sides to share their perspectives

ANSAR BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi hosted a working luncheon for the EU Ambassadors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday. This is the second such luncheon hosted by the Foreign Minister which provided an opportunity to both sides to share their perspectives and plans to carry forward the relationship. The Foreign Minister welcomed the Ambassadors and stated that Pakistan greatly valued its relations with the European Union, which are based on shared values and common objectives of peace, prosperity and development. The Pakistan-EU relationship has strengthened steadily over the years and is pursued through sound institutional mechanisms and dialogue processes. The two sides elevated their relationship by signing the Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) in June 2019. SEP is a forward-looking and comprehensive framework of cooperation in diverse areas of mutual interest. The Foreign Minister highlighted that the 'smart' lockdown strategy of the government to save lives and secure livelihoods has turned out to be

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### Pak ready to engage with Biden's US: FM

NAVEED MIRAJ / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday said Pakistan was ready to engage with the new administration of the United States, considering it an "opportunity to build a long-term, broad-based and multidimensional relationship". "Such partnership would require an institutionalized and structured engagement, based on mutual respect and cooperation," the Foreign Minister said at a webinar on Pakistan's priorities with the 46th U.S. administration, organized by Karachi Council on Foreign Relations. Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed confidence that president-elect Joe Biden as an "old friend to Pakistan" would work towards strengthening ties between the two countries. He said already exchange of messages had taken place between Prime Minister Imran Khan and the US president-elect, who expressed interest of working with Pakistan on issues of common interests.

## Pakistan successfully tests Shaheen-III ballistic missile

The test flight was aimed at re-validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system, said DG ISPR Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar

NAVEED MIRAJ

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan on Wednesday conducted a successful flight test of Shaheen-III surface ballistic missile with a range of 2,750 kilometres to effectively mar the target. The test flight was aimed at re-validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system, said Director General Inter Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar in a tweet.

According to ISPR, the successful flight test, with its impact point in the Arabian Sea, was witnessed by Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) General Nadeem Raza, Director General Strategic Plans Division, Commander Army Strategic Forces Command, Chairman NESCOM and the scientists and engineers involved. President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Imran Khan, CJCS and the Service Chiefs have congratulated the scientists and engineers on successfully conducting the missile test, the military's media wing said.



## 1m Covid-19 vaccine doses to be available in March: Dr Faisal

Dr Faisal said that the govt will be able to start free vaccination during first quarter as we are in advanced stage of discussions for procurement of vaccines

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr. Faisal Sultan on Wednesday said that around one million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines will be available in the country by the end of the first quarter. Addressing a media briefing, Dr Faisal said that the government will be able to start free COVID-19 vaccination during first quarter as the government is in the advanced stage

of discussions for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines from Chinese companies Sinopharm and Cansino to start vaccinate 70% of those over 18 years citizens with low immunity. Dr Faisal Sultan said the discussions are on the way and the government was in touch with other companies whose vaccines had been approved internationally.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi interacting with Ambassadors of European Union countries at Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

### COAS visits Sialkot garrison

DNA

SIALKOT: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Wednesday visited Sialkot garrison. COAS was briefed on situation along working boundary and operational readiness. According to a statement by ISPR, the Army Chief also interacted with garrison officers and men. COAS appreciated their professionalism and devotion to defend motherland in the face of multiple threats. COAS lauded them for their high morale and indomitable spirit, it added. Earlier, on arrival, COAS was received by Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Asim Munir.

### Covid-19 claims 48 more lives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has reported 48 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 524,783. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 11,103 on Tuesday. According to the latest figures by the NCOC 1,772 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Sindh remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic in terms of cases followed by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. Till now 237,308 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 150,889 in Punjab 64,078 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 40,304 in Islamabad, 18,640 in Balochistan, 8,672 in Azad Kashmir and 4,892 in GB. Furthermore 4,476 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 3,830 in Sindh, 1,799 in KP, 460 in Islamabad, 245 in Azad Kashmir, 191 in Balochistan, and 102 in GB.

## PM Imran vows to make Waziristan prosperous

The Prime Minister mentioned that internet access in south Waziristan was previously denied due to security situation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday announced launch of high-speed 3G and 4G mobile broadband in South Waziristan to spur technological development of the tribal districts. Addressing a gathering of tribal notables at cheque distribution ceremony under Kamyab Jawan Programme, he said launch of high-speed internet was in line with bringing

### Foreign funding: PM okay with open proceedings

WAZIRISTAN: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday challenged all those skeptical of his party's activities by saying that the proceedings of the foreign funding case should be aired live on TV. Speaking to journalists in South Waziristan, the prime minister said the proceedings should be open and that the party heads should attend the hearings. "I can put it to a challenge that PTI is the only political party that has been involved in political fundraising," PM Imran Khan said, adding that the country runs on remittance by overseas Pakistanis. Slamming the Opposition, he said that PDM and JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman use madrassah students to blackmail governments. - DNA

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## 'No complaint on misuse of blasphemy law'

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Not a single complaint was received on misuse of Blasphemy Laws during the last three months, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Special Aide to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East. Talking to media here on Wednesday, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East said that Pakistan has been reinforcing relations and cooperation with Arab Islamic Countries in all areas of trade, economy, tourism and Religious affairs. He said that some conspiring elements have been involved in fanning baseless propaganda to malign Pakistan. Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi also stated that not a single com-



plaint has been received on misuse of blasphemy laws during last three months. He also added that news published on international media relating a Christian girl was not even reported with local police and respective Institutions in Faisalabad. Thorough investigations were held on complaint of a girl, whose complaint was received in Faisalabad earlier and further investigations will be held in this regard, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi. Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi also stated that for Pakistan, every single daughter irrespective of his religion belief and religious sect is daughter of the nation.

## Madrid: Explosion leaves at least 3 dead

DNA

MADRID: At least three people were killed and eight injured Wednesday in an explosion caused by a suspected gas leak in the heart of the Spanish capital, Madrid, according to the city's emergency services. The blast, which occurred in a building on Toledo Street, caused widespread damage, according to video footage tweeted out by the Madrid city hall emergency information service, Emergencias Madrid. Images from the scene showed a section of exterior wall had been torn off several floors of the building, leaving rooms exposed to view. Debris covered parked vehicles and the street below, and a mangled metal street sign could be seen on the ground. At least four floors have been impacted by the explosion and firefighters are evacuating people from the area, the service said.

## Outgoing Vietnam envoy meets FS

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood on Wednesday said Pakistan wanted to further deepen bilateral cooperation with Vietnam in the areas of trade, investment, culture and tourism. The Foreign Secretary expressed these views as he received Vietnam's ambassador Hoang Kim, who paid a farewell call on him here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Foreign Secretary lauded the valuable contribution of the outgoing ambassador towards strengthening Pak-Vietnam relations during his stay in Pakistan. - DNA

## Biden admin to revive military ties with Pakistan

Gen Austin made these remarks during his confirmation hearing for the post of secretary of defence before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee

POST REPORT

WASHINGTON: The Biden administration sees Pakistan as an "essential partner" in any peace process in Afghanistan and believes that "continuing to build relationships with Pakistan's military will provide openings for the United States and Pakistan to cooperate on key issues," says its nominated defence chief Gen Lloyd J Austin.

Gen Austin made these remarks during his confirmation hearing for the post of secretary of defence before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

"Pakistan is an essential partner in any peace process in Afghanistan," Austin, a former head of the US Central Command, told the committee. "If confirmed, I will encourage a regional approach that garners support from neighbours like Pakistan, while also deterring regional actors, from serving as spoilers to the Afghanistan peace process." When asked what changes he would recommend to US relations with Pakistan as the new defence chief, Gen Austin said: "I will focus on our shared interests which include training future Pakistan military leaders through



the use of International Military Education and Training funds. Pakistan will play an important role in any political settlement in Afghanistan. We also need to work with Pakistan to defeat al Qaeda

and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) and to enhance regional stability." Asked if he has perceived any change in Pakistan's cooperation with the US since the Trump administration's decision in 2018 to withhold security assistance, Gen Austin said: "I understand Pakistan has taken constructive steps to meet US requests in support of the Afghanistan peace process. Pakistan has also taken steps against anti-Indian groups, such as Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-i-Mohammad, although this progress is incomplete." The general, however, acknowledged that "many factors in ad-

dition to the security assistance suspension may impact Pakistan's cooperation, including Afghanistan negotiations and the dangerous escalation following the Pulwama terrorist attack." "Pakistan is a sovereign country," he said when asked what tools and options the US had to influence Pakistan. "I will press Pakistan to prevent its territory from being used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organisations. Continuing to build relationships with Pakistan's military will provide openings for the United States and Pakistan to cooperate on key issues."

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Pak-UAE enjoy a special relation: FM Qureshi - Page 08

## Briefs

## Haleem for putting Murad Shah's name on ECL

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Vice President Haleem Adil Sheikh on Wednesday demanded for putting the name of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on the Exit Control List (ECL) in the backdrop of a NAB probe of his corruption. He stated this while addressing a press conference at Sindh Assembly Building here. Bilal Ghaffar, Dr Imran, Nusrat Wahid, Jai Parkash Ukrani and others were also present on the occasion. Haleem alleged that the frontman of Sindh rulers Anwar Majid is involved in tractor scam and he was also given subsidy of billions of rupees in Dadu Sugar Mills and Thatta Sugar Mills. He said these corrupt people also harmed the Sindh Bank and they are also involved in Nooriabad power plant scam. He demanded that a probe should also be held about the assets of Fiyaz Jatoi, whose family members are officers of up to 22-Grade. Their bank accounts should also be probed. He said there is a huge corruption in Roshan Sindh Program. He alleged that Sharjeel Inam Memon is involved in mega corruption and the Sindh assembly Speaker has included his name in Penal of Chairmen. He said these corrupt rulers devoured Rs920million in the name of castration of stray dogs. He said these people have made government schools non-functional, which are now being used as animal pens. — APP

## Change of demography a war crime: Masood

DNA

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu Kashmir [AJK]: President Sardar Masood Khan has said that the establishment of a legal think tank in Pakistan has become inevitable for greater understanding of international law, foreign policy, challenges to national security and the legal aspects of the Kashmir conflict so that jurists of the country through mutual exchange of views on the issue of national importance come up with their comprehensive recommendations on these matters. Inaugurating a legal think tank at Millennium University College in the federal metropolis on Wednesday, he said that multilateral judicial process is complex and therefore it is important that the whole nation must adopt a uniform legal approach to presenting the Kashmir issue, AJK President office said Wednesday evening. Organized by Centre for Law and National Security (CLNS), the event was also addressed by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and National Security Advisor, Dr Moeed Yusuf, Parliamentary Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ms Andleeb Abbas, Former Director-General, NDU Maj Gen (Retd.)

## 'Govt to distribute RS10bn under KJP'

DNA

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Youth Development Usman Dar here Wednesday said that government would distribute additional Rs10 billion in youth of the country including merged tribal districts in next few years under PTI Government flagship Kamayab Jawan Programme to help enable them to start their own businesses and contribute in the country's development. Addressing the cheques distribution ceremony in South Waziristan tribal district here, Usman Dar said that about Rs5 billion have already been distributed among youth of the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under Kamayab Jawan Programme. Prime Minister Imran Khan, KP Governor Shah Farman, Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Ali Amin Gandapur, Special Assistant to PM for Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill and others high ups were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al Zaabi handing over the sleeping bags to managing director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Aon Abbas Buppi, for the poor residents of panahgah. — DNA

## Pakistan values close ties with Libya : President Alvi

While congratulating the Ambassador-designate on his appointment, the President urged him to take steps for improving commercial relations with Libya and work for the welfare of Pakistani diaspora

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan highly values its close and fraternal ties with Libya and wants to further promote bilateral relations in all areas of mutual interest. He gave these remarks while talking to the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan

to Libya, Major General (R) Rashad Javed, who called on him, Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. While congratulating the Ambassador-designate on his appointment, the President urged him to take steps for improving commercial relations with Libya and work for the welfare of Pakistani diaspora. He welcomed the cessation of hostilities in Libya and said that Pakistan

stood by Libyan people in their quest for peace and prosperity. He asked the Ambassador to work for improving the image of the country as well as expose India's real face which had unleashed a reign of terror against the Muslim population of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Later, the High Commissioner-designate of Pakistan to Rwanda, Mr Amir Muhammad

Khan, also called on the President. Talking to the High Commissioner-designate, the President said that Pakistan and Rwanda enjoyed cordial relations which needed to be further enhanced. He stated that both countries had great potential for enhanced trade and economic relations. He stressed the need for initiating bilateral political consultations with Rwanda and exchange of

visits at the Ministerial level that would help in further strengthening bilateral relations. Appreciating the Government's decision to open five new Missions in Africa after a long time, he expressed the hope that the opening of new missions would further solidify relations with African countries under the "Engage Africa" policy of the present government.

## Workshop about digitization in security, foreign policy held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "We are now witnessing intense political debates about the global future of the internet and fierce international competition over the leadership in artificial intelligence (AI)." This was stated by Dr. Daniel Voelsen, Senior Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, in his presentation at the Online Workshop on "Internet, Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Technologies - Implications for Security and Foreign Policy" organized by the Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Pakistan on Wednesday. Stressing on the security policy implications of the internet, AI, and quantum technologies, Dr. Voelsen said that these technologies create great opportunities but also new security

risks like advanced cyber-attacks, lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS), and breaking the existing encryption mechanisms. Talking about the foreign policy implications, he said that states have different AI visions, data management mechanisms, and cyber ideologies that would lead to greater geopolitical confrontation in the future. While welcoming the participants, Ambassador Aiaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, said that international regulatory processes vis-vis these technologies are much slower than the pace of defacto technological development. "We need to understand that how fast this spectrum of technological change especially the quantum change will take place and how the international community will adapt to this change," he added. In his remarks, Mr. Steffen Kudella, Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation Pakistan, said that technological developments such as digitization are and will be one of the

greatest game-changers for the future of humanity. Earlier in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC, said that AI and cyber technologies are going to change state behavior in major ways. AI and cyber technologies are acting as "agents of change," and have the potential to transform our future including our national security. Furthermore, quantum technology is not only opening doors to new technologies but is also enhancing the great power competition for "quantum supremacy." At the end of the workshop, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, stated that developing states have to raise awareness about the global technological transformations. They should also focus on engaging relevant stakeholders, invest in research and development, enhance public-private partnerships, and achieve indigenization in various fields of emerging technologies.

## Islamabad police issue fortnight performance report

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police on Wednesday issued its fortnight performance report with an objective to inform people about policing efforts to ensure protection to their lives and property. The report was formally launched by the Director Public Relations Islamabad Police, Syed Bilal during a press conference here which included policing measures and reforms taken following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman to resolve citizens' complaints and bridge the gap between police and public.

After assuming the charge on January 8, 2021 as Inspector General of Police, Qazi Jamil ur Rehman directed for several measures to ensure effective policing. The main objectives of these reforms and measures are to present Islamabad police for accountability, resolve public complaints, highlight policing efforts for friendly police ecology along with its success story. The main steps taken following the directions of IGP Islamabad during the last 15 days included the appointments of SSP (Investigation), SSP (Operations) and outlining criteria (test and interview) for appointments of SHO and Muharras.

## Kinnow exports in slow pace to achieve its target

DNA

LAHORE: Vice President Pakistan Businesses Forum (PBF), Ahmad Jawad on Wednesday says Afghanistan recently imposed import duty on Pakistani kinnows upsetting the 100,000-tons market to exporters. Despite two countries remain in talks. Currently Afghanistan impose custom duty at 30 percent on kinnow at the import side which swerved hammer to achieve kinnow export target. Though Pakistan and Afghanistan are to hold the next round of parleys on new draft of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) at the end of the current month or early next month as the term of pact will expire on February 11, 2021. "Jawad revealed that differences exist between the two sides particularly on three to

four issues, due to which the minutes of the second round were not signed". However to open a new chapter of transit trade and to facilitate transit trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan, both sides almost agreed on urgent solution of the remaining operational issues as soon as possible. The Afghan side pointed out that Pakistan has raised the customs valuation on Afghan exports to Pakistan especially on fresh fruits and dry fruits since last three years. Pakistan side stated that Afghanistan has also raised customs valuation on Pakistan kinnow, mango and vegetables exports. Both sides agreed to review and agree to a mechanism beneficial for exporters on both sides within one month including other issues too which also involves the issue of containers and Demurrages & Detention Charges.



SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Prime Minister Imran Khan distributes Kamyab Jawan youth entrepreneurship scheme cheques among the beneficiaries at Wana. — DNA

## Azeri embassy, SU organize webinar

Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Ali Alizada explained students about events and the sacrifices of the Azerbaijani civilians during the webinar on Martyrs Remembrance Day. Ambassador told that Martyrs' Day is a national holiday in Azerbaijan. It may also be known as 'the Day of the Nationwide Sorrow'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Azerbaijan in Pakistan in cooperation with Sargodha University organized a webinar for students of a number of Pakistani universities on "From Martyrdom to Victory" dedicated to January 20 - Mar-

tyrs' Remembrance Day. Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Ali Alizada explained students about events and the sacrifices of the Azerbaijani civilians during the webinar on Martyrs Remembrance Day. Ambassador told that Martyrs' Day is a national holiday in Azerbaijan. It may also be known as 'the Day of the Nationwide



Sorrow'. It is observed on 20 January every year. Students of Sargodha University discussed various important matters of higher education with Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada during the online discussion. Students also shared their experience of university life with Azerbaijan ambassador. After in the discussion the Ambassador

of Azerbaijan, Ali Alizada advised Sargodha University students to focus on their studies to achieve bigger goals in life ahead. Ali Alizada further said that it is utmost important for the students to complete their education because that is the only way you thru which you can play a positive role in development of the country.

## Sindh Ministers reacts on NAB reference

DNA

KARACHI: Provincial Ministers have condemned the NAB's reference against Chief Minister of Sindh and saying that it was result of NAB & Niazi nexus. They added that reference against Sindh Chief Minister was ill intended & malicious. "Attempts are being made to harass the PPP ministers by filing false cases, but we are not afraid of such acts," they said. These views were expressed by Provincial Minister for Information Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Provincial Minister for Education Saeed Ghani and Provincial Advisor on Law Barister Murtaza Wahab while addressing a joint press conference at Sindh Assembly Committee Room on Wednesday. Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh Shehzad Memon and former Provincial Minister Javed Naguri were also present on the occasion. Sindh Minister Information Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that PPP candidate Syed Ameer Ali Shah won by-election in Umerkot in which Pakistan Peoples Party got more votes than the general election, while his rival, the Grand Alliance candidate supported by federal government alliance, received less votes than in the previous general election. He said that Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah was implementing the vision of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari by caring out mega development works in the province at a fast pace, therefore, the people of PS-52 gave their mandate to PPP in absolute majority.

## Automobile industry shifts to ecommerce

DNA

LAHORE: Impact of the pandemic on economies has been such that the way of doing business has changed with a great deal which has resulted in favor of e-commerce. With majority of customers preferring to stay at home, online shopping has proven to grow in the past few months noticeably. Given the changing consumer behaviour and an increasing number of customers moving online, Pakistan's largest online marketplace Daraz is now expanding its portfolio by entering the auto segment with the launch of dMotors, a massive collection of cars, bikes, and accessories. In the past few months the platform has also seen a growing demand for motorbikes and car accessories with orders going up to 500,000+ in the category. Kicking off this endeavour with the Daraz Grand Auto Bazaar '21, the platform will utilise its technology to offer consumers on its platform a wide range of automobiles, motorcycles, and related accessories. Daraz users will be able to utilise Daraz's user-friendly interface to avail of amazing offers in the Grand Auto Bazaar '21 via Voucher Fireworks, Brand Flash Sales, and One Rupee Gamethat gives customers a chance to win a bike every single day from 18th to 24th January on the Daraz APP.

## OICCI holds 3rd Women Empowerment Awards

KARACHI: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) and its member companies are the torch bearers for empowering women at the workplace. The corporate sector across Pakistan can replicate the 'OICCI Women' initiative to foster economic growth of the country." Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Pakistan, Wouter Plomp, remarked while commending the efforts of foreign investors at the OICCI Women Empowerment Awards 2020 organized online. The Dutch Ambassador, who was the chief guest at the event, lauded the efforts of the OICCI and observed that OICCI Women is a great platform to create a movement for women empowerment in the country and appreciated the OICCI initiative to publicly acknowledge the efforts of member companies to give women equal employment opportunity and congenial working environment for the economy to grow. — APP

## Briefs

### Lok Virsa to hold Sufi Sangat today

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) will hold Sufi Sangat on the poetic vision of "Mian Mohammad Bakhsh today. Sufi Sangat titled "Saif-ul-Maluk" will shed light on the verses (Kafi) from his major and well known work Saif-ul-Malook, which is popular in all parts of the world where Punjabi is understood.

Author of great sufi wisdom Saeed Ahmed will narrate the story and verses of his poetry from Saif-ul-Maluk in which the beautiful story of love between a prince and a fairy was written in a poetry form by Muhammad Bakhsh, an official told here on Wednesday. Mystic poet of Punjabi literature Mian Muhammad Bakhsh wrote Saif-ul-Malook at the age of just 33 in which he narrated about himself. He said that "today they are millions of his admirers and hundreds of readers of the Saif-ul-Maluk". He said that he devoted his whole life writing such powerful spiritual thoughts in a versified form whose beauty now must be admired in a sincere and honest way. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh not only talks about the various social evils such as greed, lust, violence, arrogance and negative trends in the society but also gives solutions for the problems, he stated. - APP

### ANF recovers 3.98 tons drugs during operations

ISLAMABAD: The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) carried out 23 operations across the country and recovered 3.98 tons narcotics valuing US \$148.75 million in international market, arrested 23 accused and impounded 11 vehicles. According to an ANF spokesman, the seized drugs comprised of 3860.9 kg hashish, 93.458 kg heroin, 22.280 kg methamphetamine (Ice) and 3.6 kg opium. Sharing details of operations, he said, Police Station ANF Quetta intercepted a vehicle near Bakra Mandi situated at Killi Umer Daraz, Airport Road, Quetta and recovered 13 kg hashish. An accused namely Muhammad Naem resident of Kuchlak was arrested. In another operation, the staff of Police Station Regional Directorate Balochistan recovered 1500 kgs hashish from Killi Daman, Tehsil Gulistan, Qilla Abdullah district.

### Mohr starts social inclusion of transgenders in twin cities

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) has started social inclusion of vulnerable transgenders in the social protection and health caring settings and social security safety nets in the times of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. According to an official, the transgender persons continue to experience discrimination from service providers and staff across the social protection that leave them poorer and more vulnerable in the face of COVID-19 pandemic. He said the main aim of the said program was to provide safety to the most vulnerable transgender persons living in twin cities.

He said the initiative is the first outcome of the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) and UNDP Human Rights Taskforce on COVID-19 for collaboration on efforts through a human rights lens. He said that geographical areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi were a part of the assessment while the assessment itself was disaggregated along multiple categories including, age, disability if any, health status, pre-COVID19 employment/income generation capacity, residence, and any experience of Gender Based Violence (GBV). He also said that the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) was on board to ensure ownership from the government. - APP

## Kosovo wants to enhance trade ties with Pakistan

Amb. Ilir Gugolli said that Kosovo was interested in developing sector-specific relations with Pakistan to make some tangible progress and later on these relations could be diversified to cover more areas of mutual cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Kosovo wanted to enhance its trade and economic relations with Pakistan as both countries have good potential to do trade with each other in many areas. This was said by H.E. Ilir Dugolli, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Kosovo to Pakistan while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Zahid Anjum, Kosovo's Honorary Consul also accompanied him at the occasion. Ilir Gugolli said that Kosovo was interested in developing sector-specific relations with Pakistan to make some tangible progress and later on these relations could be diversified to cover more areas of mutual cooperation.

He said that Kosovo has signed trade agreements with many countries that provided it duty free market access to the USA, Canada, EU, UK etc. and added that by promoting trade relations with it, Pakistan could enhance its exports to these markets. He said that Kosovo was interested in reviving its closed industrial units and Pakistani investors should explore the prospects of acquiring them that would enable them to promote exports to many European markets. He further said that Kosovo wanted to have an investment protection treaty with Pakistan that would give more confidence to the investors of both countries in making reciprocal investments and JVs. He was of the view that regular interaction between private sectors with follow



up meetings should be the way forward to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations between Kosovo and Pakistan. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Kosovo

was an unexplored market for Pakistani business community and emphasized that both countries should facilitate the regular exchange of trade delegations and organizing B2B meetings to explore all potential areas of mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Kosovo.

He said that the economy of Pakistan was now on a growth trajectory and Pakistan could export many products to Kosovo including textiles, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, IT products and services, sports goods, leather products, fruits and vegetables. He said

that Kosovo is mostly importing its products of around \$4 billion from European countries and it should focus on importing from Pakistan to get quality products at cost effective prices. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that ICCI was ready to organize a zoom meeting with Kosovo Chamber of Commerce & Industry taking online other major chambers of commerce and industry of Pakistan to promote direct contacts and business linkages between the private sectors of both countries. He said that ICCI was also ready to provide One Window facility to Kosovar investors for exploring the opportunities of JVs and investment in Pakistan. He further said that ICCI could organize a cultural exhibition of Kosovo to introduce its culture in Pakistan and promote cultural relations between the two countries.

### Islamabad to have two pet friendly parks soon

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CDA has decided to start two pet friendly parks in two sectors of Islamabad namely F6 and E7. This will enable the pet owners to have out doors with their pets in well equipped and pet friendly environment. Moreover, this step will be harbinger of the promotion of animal rights and will be first of its kind project in Pakistan. This is the part of renovation and improvement plan of the existing parks in which CDA management has been trying to establish and improve existing parks and outdoor facilities for greener and healthier environment for the citizens.

### AIOU to conduct admission tests from Feb 7

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced admission test schedule for the programs offered in the 1st phase of admissions for spring 2021 semester including PhD, M Phil/ MS, MSc and BS programs. First and second merit lists will be displayed on the university website February 25, 2021 and March 03, 2021 respectively. Classes will be held at the main campus, Islamabad, AIOU.

### IRSA releases 31,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 32,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1470.73 feet, which was 78.73 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15,200 cusecs each. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1171.60 feet, which was 131.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 10,400 cusecs and 1,000 cusecs respectively. - APP

### IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporarily suspended as per given schedule:-

On 21st January from 09:00 am to 02:00 pm, Rohtas, Riaz Shaheed, Dina City, Kot Dhamik, Thackaray, G-6/3, Polyclinic, Mahfooz Shaheed, Orchard, Islamabad Club, Lohi Bhair, Simli Dam, Sohhdaran Road, F-10 / 4, G-9/1, G-10/1, CWO, G-10/2, G-10/4, I-10/1, G-13/2, NPF, T&T, Guldana, PC, Kohala, Treat, Syedpur Road, B Block, Shakrial, Al Noor Colony, Muslim Town, Iqbal Road-2, Sarafa Bazar, Westridge, Ali Market, Eid Gah, Azizabad, Zeeshan Colony, Kamalabad, KTM, Modern Flour Mill, Range

Road, Rata, Bank Road-2, Jahangir Road, Rehmatnagar-2, CBR-1, Mehboob Shaheed, Jhanda, Humayun, Kalia, Garja-1, Sihala College, Major Hanif, Klar, Khawaja, Faiz Ahmed Shaheed, New Choa, Mandra-2, LTC, ECM, HPT-3, Sukho, Syed Kasran, Bhal, New City A Block, New City I Block, Multi Orchard, Nisar Shaheed, Museum, Mushtaq Hussain, Jalala, Kohsar Valley, Hameed, Darya Sharif, Shanka, Qaziabad, Aminabad, Daral-salaam, Sarka, Malhwali, Batui, Sajid Shaheed, Fateh Jang-2, Hanjra, Dhakner, Ahmadal, Khandha, Pura, Pakhwal, F-9 Chak Daulat, M. Riaz Shaheed, Madukals, Dina-1, Bakralla, Pedial, Mumtaz Shaheed, Sandal, Gujjar Khan, City Sohawa, Mal Awan, Galyana, Islampura, Line Park, Minara, Sir Pa Thackara feeders and surrounding areas will be remain without power.

## Pak-Bangladesh ties are vital for prosperity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Bangladesh should build relations through cultural diplomacy, as both countries share common religion, customs, cuisines, art and history. These were the remarks made by former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh, Mr. Rafiuzzaman Siddiqui, while speaking at a webinar "Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations" organized by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). Speakers included former Ambassador to Indonesia, Ms. Nasim Firdaus, Professor Shahiduzzaman, international security and

foreign policy analyst from Dhaka, and Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director of CRSS. He added that Sheikh Hasina can play a critical role in bringing the two countries together by resolving the mutual issues. Trade cooperation, open borders and cultural exchanges can help in enhancing the relationship. Former Ambassador Nasim Firdaus said that the first step in building the relationship between the two countries is to recognize the happenings of the past. She considered Pakistan's apology to Bangladesh about the events of 1971 significant because the general public is in the dark and it is essential to give them an

understanding of those events. She added that negotiations, hearing each other's grievances and cultural exchanges can be helpful but the major role has to be played by the policy makers. Professor Shahiduzzaman stated that Pakistan should understand Bangladesh's geopolitical realities and should consider the geostrategic limitations posed to Bangladesh. He emphasized on the need for Pakistan to improve people to people relations. He added that Pakistan should contest India for creating opportunities of public communication and cultural diplomacy. Moreover, Pakistan should remove the bureaucratic hurdles that impede

the tourism industry from flourishing. In his closing remarks he said that it is not possible to bypass the geopolitical factors but Pakistan can form geopolitical friendly strategies for example, geostrategic initiatives like strengthening Bangladesh-China relations. Ambassador Rafiuzzaman closed the conversation by stating that Pakistan should consider accepting past mistakes to strengthen its status as a responsible state in the region. Ambassador Nasim appreciated Ambassador Rafiuzzaman's stance and stated that this move can act as the foundation of brotherly relations between the two neighbors.

### PNCA to start music, arts classes from January 23

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) has planned to start music and art classes to attract aspirant of music lovers and art learners in supervision of music professional and master artisans of painting and calligraphy from January 23. Competent musicians and skillful artisans in different specialized craft would impart training to registered participants. According to an official of PNCA, different classes would be held including singing, tabla, painting, calligraphy, photography, guitar, violin, rubab, keyboard, piano, flute, sitar, acting and dancing with professionally trained instructors. He said that the class-

es would continue in the month of January and February. He said that "these classes were an effort to promote music of all genres and crafts field along with polishing the creative skills of the young blood". "We believe in giving musicians and artists the platform they need to grow and the inspiration they seek to realize their unique potential", he stated. He said that any citizen could participate in these classes without any age bracket. He said that the registration of at least 10 participants would be obligatory to start a training course and interested individuals could get them enrolled by emailing to PNCA official Facebook page. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly Ramesh Kumar handing over application by Hindu family to Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi about 11 Pakistani Hindus killed in India. - DNA

## HEC's new PhD policies to produce quality graduates

The Chairman said that there was a mismatch between the education system and the industry needs, which rightly raised concerns pertaining to a lack of marketable skills in the graduates produced by Pakistani universities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The new Undergraduate Education Policy 2020 and the PhD Policy are aimed to protect students' right to acquire quality education and to increase the value of higher education degrees nationally and internationally. This was stated by Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Mr. Tariq Banuri while addressing a news conference here on Wednesday. The Chairman said that there was a mismatch between the education system and the industry needs, which rightly raised concerns pertaining to a lack of marketable skills in the graduates produced by Pakistani universities. He said that the Undergraduate

Education Policy 2020 has been formulated to address these concerns, adding that the policy will promote practical competence and general education skills in addition to the tradition focus on discipline-based curriculum. "To promote practical competency of students, the universities will ensure that their graduates acquire a nine-week internship in addition to going through an extracurricular training before obtaining degrees." Mr. Banuri said that the universities must be committed to produce qualified graduates, whose overall level of knowledge and competence is up to the mark. He informed the media persons that the professional accreditation councils are being strengthened to improve the quality of disciplinary education.

"Our intention is to improve the quality of our graduates and the confidence of employers in the worth of our degrees." Regarding the structure of undergraduate education, he said that the two-year BA/BSc and MA/MSc programmes have been phased out to shift towards four-year BS programmes, and the Associate Degree programme, a credit-based system, has replaced the two-year BA/BSc degree, however the students who want to continue their studies can have a bridge to the four-year BS programme. Elaborating the new PhD Policy, Mr. Banuri said that it has been upgraded in line with the international best practices and is applicable from 1st January, 2021. He said that the BS graduates can now directly take admission in

PhD programmes and in a different discipline if universities find them 'prepared' and 'committed'. The Chairman explained that preparedness means that the students have enough knowledge, competence, and previous academic training enabling them to succeed in a PhD programme. "The universities will also assess the applicants' commitment to the discipline," he added. Apart from the admission criteria, the PhD students will have to go through a thorough evaluation before they complete their studies. Likewise, the teaching and mentoring system has also been reorganised on the pattern of ancient Sufi episteme, so that students may better benefit from their teachers and mentors. He said that the universities may

choose to have BS or MS/MPhil as the minimum criteria for admissions, however, the minimum requirement for admission in PhD programmes is a BS degree. If the PhD students come directly from BS programmes, they may be required to complete a larger number of credit hours compared to those who have previously completed MS/MPhil degrees. The policy requires the scholars to study 50 per cent of courses in the university that covers two years in residence, so that the students can closely interact with their supervisors. The Chairman informed the media that the two policies were formulated after thorough deliberations and consultations with the relevant stakeholders including Vice Chancellors, professors, and educationists.

## Briefs

## 'Maulana intends to politicize Kashmir Day'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit and Baltistan Ali Amin Khan Gandapur Wednesday said the announcement of Maulana Fazal ur Rehman to hold a public rally on February 5 showed his intent to politicize the Kashmir Solidarity Day for personal-political gains. In a news release, he said the Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) planned public rally on the Kashmir day was meant to cover up their leaders' corruption instead of highlighting the Kashmiris' plight. He said the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazal (JULF) chief was more interested to exploit the day for saving his politics which were based on defending the corrupt and corruption. Gandapur said, he had less intention to hold demonstrations in support of Kashmir on the day, which was evident from his his 'poor performance' as the Kashmir committee chairman. "Nation knows very well as to how many protests Maulana had held in the favour of Kashmiris," he added. He said Maulana had already damaged the Kashmir cause by holding a so-called Azadi march in 2019, and now was on the roads in quest of power. The minister said every willful move of the PDM, which was meant to project the corruption, exposed its leaders before the nation. He maintained that the PDM had played its last political card and now they had only left with an option of 'Action Replay'. Pakistani nation had seen their political 'drama' in the forms of public meetings, Long March and announcement for en mass resignation in haste.

## PCRWR declares 13 water brands as unsafe

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) Wednesday, in its quarterly report, declared 13 brands of bottled water as unsafe for human consumption. According to the comparison of test results with permissible limits of Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), 13 brands were unsafe for human consumption. For the last quarter (October to December, 2020), 119 samples of bottled/mineral water brands were collected from Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Gilgit, D.G.Khan, Multan, Faisalabad, Karachi, Bahawalpur, Tando Jam, Sialkot, Muzaffarabad and Lahore. Five brands (i.e. MASKOOB, Blue Life, ONE, Dropice, Blue Plus) were found to be unsafe due to presence of higher levels of sodium ranging from 64-100 mg/L than PSQCA bottled water quality standard for Sodium (50 mg/L). Three brands (i.e. MASKOOB, Al Safa, Pure Nature) were found unsafe due to presence of high level of Arsenic ranging from 14-29 /L than PSQCA water quality standard for Arsenic (10 /L). Two brands (i.e. Aqua SWAG, More Plus) were found unsafe due to presence of low level of pH. Four brands (i.e. McWay Water, Pristin One, Alkaline Water, Aqua Star) were found micro biologically contaminated and thus were unsafe. The detailed report is available on PCRWR website www.pcrwr.gov.pk. The government through the Ministry of Science and Technology has designated the task to the PCRWR for quarterly monitoring of bottled/mineral water brands and publicize the results in the best interest of public health.



ISLAMABAD: Delegation of RCCI led by president Mohammad Nasir Mirza visited ministry of climate change and met with Minister Zartaj Gul for discussion on upcoming spring plantation drive. – DNA

## 'Pak to highlight Kashmir heritage through modern media'

He said that through art and culture, Kashmir Committee was trying to project the true image of Kashmir. "We are projecting Kashmiri culture through all modern tools including art, culture and performing arts. Humanity needs to be protected and promoted and Kashmir cause would be highlighted," he remarked

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Shehryar Afridi Khan Afridi Wednesday said the Pakistan government was employing modern media tools to project the rich heritage of Kashmir. The present government's core priority in communications domain was given to fine arts and culture and would employ vibrant media as soft image to counter anti-Islam and Kashmir

propaganda. Addressing a seminar on Role of Media in Pakistan-Turkey Relations and the launching ceremony of Turkey Urdu website here, he said the initiative of "Turkey Urdu" itself was speaking volumes for Pakistan-Turkey cordial historic ties. "India shall get ready for a shock as Pakistan is also going to use media through performing arts for giving her a ridiculous response on merciless brutalities and killings of innocent Kashmiris in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu

and Kashmir (IIOJK)." He said that through art and culture, Kashmir Committee was trying to project the true image of Kashmir. "We are projecting Kashmiri culture through all modern tools including art, culture and performing arts. Humanity needs to be protected and promoted and Kashmir cause would be highlighted," he remarked. "Media's role in the modern times has proved its utility. The way the western world has used the modern media tools to distort image of

Muslims proves this fact. They have distorted history through misusing media tools. This is the reason that Prime Minister Imran Khan has been urging for using media to project true image of Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah," he said. Shehryar said the global key players had distorted history and used soft image of culture and media in Muslim countries where Pakistan was lagging behind to promote its indigenous culture in the brotherly Muslim states that would help

boost harmony and people to people contacts, he added. He added that Pakistani and Turkish media should narrate the tales of half widows and prisoners of IIOJK to the world audiences. He said that Pakistan and Turkey would fight the case of revival of Muslim Ummah and the future world would present Pak-Turk friendship as model for the world nations. Speaking on the occasion, Turkish Ambassador Ihsan Musata Yardakul said there were plenty of me-

dia portals to project the positive image of Pakistan and they should be used to do so. He added that there was huge potential of economic collaboration between Pakistan and Turkey that should be explored by both sides. Senator Talha Mahmood, Farooq Adil, Chairman Tehreek-e-Jawan Pakistan and Kashmir Abdullah Hamid Gul, Lieutenant General (R) Khalid Naem Lodhi, Executive Director Turkiye Urdu Muhammad Hassan and others also addressed the seminar.

## PSF, IIU to initiate joint ventures

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) and International Islamic University (IIU) will collaborate with each other to initiate knowledge economy based joint ventures. This was discussed during a meeting of Chairman PSF, Professor Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig with Rector Dr. Masoom Yasinzaai and President Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi. During the meeting, issues pertaining to mutual interests including ongoing projects through mutual cooperation and launch of knowledge economy based ventures were discussed. The Chairman PSF hailed progress on a PSF-funded Triple Helix Project on Up scaling of AI-enabled Data Mining Platform for Informed Decision Making for COVID-19 and Future

Pandemic Scenarios for government of Pakistan at Centre of Advanced Electronics and Photovoltaic Engineering. He said that IIU's proposal for science projects through its office of ORIC will be welcomed. He appreciated the participation of the faculty, experts and researchers of IIU saying that they have a compatible approach according to prevailing circumstances. He also appreciated the services of the university's CAEPE science facility terming it of best international standards. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Masoom that universities need special attention adding that investment in academia is the best step taken towards a bright and secure future. – APP

## ISSI, ASC discuss opp for joint ventures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP), Institute for Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a meeting with the Dean and faculty members, Area Study Centre (ASC) for North and South America and Africa, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad here on Wednesday. Members from the Area Study Centre included: Dr. Nazir Hussain, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS), QAU, Dr. Sadia Suleman, Incharge, Area Study Centre and faculty members Dr. Brahmmand Shah, Dr. Tahir Jamil, Dr. Ayesha Siddiqi, Dr. Munawar Hussain

and Ms. Sarah Ahsan, Senior Research Fellow at the ASC. Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, in his welcome remarks, briefly introduced the working of the Institute and explained its scope, various functions and activities. Dr. Nazir Hussain in his remarks informed the participants about the activities and publication of ASC, and said that ASC will be soon resuming its US-Pakistan Annual Conference in collaboration with the US Embassy and Ball State University. He invited CSP to participate in the conference. Dr. Sadia Suleman, in her remarks stated that the Centre is trying to add a new dimension to its activities by looking for

new avenues and also by enhancing the capacity building of its students. She identified core areas in which the ASC would like to engage with ISSI. These include: engagement of students with ISSI via internships, access of the ISSI library and participation of students in talks and events at the ISSI. She also proposed mutual research between ASC faculty and ISSI research team in the shape of joint publications and also sharing of resources. She emphasised on joint events and closer cooperation and coordination between the ASC and CSP. Dr. Sadia said that both the Centres will soon be entering into a formal memorandum of understanding for joint collaboration.

## PNCA, 'Theater Wallay' join hands

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and 'Theater Wallay' have joined hands to conduct theater/acting classes at PNCA on the weekends from Saturday. New admissions have commenced in three months long acting and theater course, said a press release. 'Theater Wallay' is a non-commercial group of artists with a passion for theater and literature. 'Theater Wallay' has put up many performances of plays hailing from world literature.

One of our original productions, the acclaimed 'Daagh Ujala' (This Stained Dawn), toured the United States in 2015. Another project, of the group titled 'On Common Ground', toured the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Artists Repertory Theater Portland in June/July 2017. 'Theater Wallay' was also involved in 'Theater for Social Change' projects and works to promote the use of creative expression as a tool for empowerment and critical dialogue. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Geoffrey Shaw calling on minister for interior, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. – DNA

## Govt announces various reforms in civil services

ISLAMABAD: The government has announced various reforms in civil services to improve performance of government employees and departments. This was stated by Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafiqat Mahmood, who also heads Cabinet Committee on Institutional Reforms, while addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Wednesday.

The Minister said reforms have been introduced in promotion, premature retirement, efficiency and discipline, appointment in MP scale, rotation; and strength of Pakistan Administrative Service. The Minister said promotion of civil servants will depend on a process involving forty percent share of Annual Confidential Reports, thirty percent training and thirty percent board evaluation. He said promotion of the official facing a reference will be deferred.

About premature retirement, the Minister said the FPSC Chairman will decide the cases from BS-20 while the decisions from scales 17 to 19 will be taken by Secretary and up to 16th scale by a senior joint secretary. He said three below average or average ACRs can serve a ground for premature retirement of an official. He said plea bargain option availed by an official can also provide ground for retirement.

As for amendments in Efficiency and Discipline rules, the Minister said it has been decided that an inquiry committee will give its decision in 60 days, and the authority will take decision of punishment in 30 days. He said disciplinary action may also be taken against the person availing plea bargain option in a case. He said multiple inquires against an official will be clubbed. Shafiqat Mahmood said the Cabinet Committee on Institutional Reforms also decided some changes in appointment in MP scale. He said the period has been increased from two to three years, and it can be further extended. He said a post in MP scale can be publicized and a suitable person can also be picked from the market. Regarding rotation policy, the Minister said no officer can stay in provinces beyond 10 years. He said promotion has also been linked to rotation policy. He said strength of Pakistan Administrative Service has also been decreased. – APP

## ECC reduces tax on commercial sugar imports

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet Wednesday approved reduction of Withholding Income Tax on commercial import of white sugar and raw sugar form 5.5% to 0.25% besides approving removal of Value Added Sales Tax on import of white sugar. The approval was given on the presentation of summary by Ministry of Industries and Production for import of sugar with an aim to reduce upward pressure on prices of sugar and to buffer up carry-over stocks before the arrival of the fresh crop. The reduction in taxes will incentivize the sugar mills for import of 300,000 MT Raw Sugar upto 30th June 2021, said a statement issued by the Finance Ministry adding, the committee further directed Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to import white sugar upto 500,000 MT if and when needed during the current season.

## Curtain-raiser to Aman-7

DNA

While the world struggles to meet the challenges of the pandemic COVID-19, the responsibility of defence can neither be relegated nor postponed because existential threats do not diminish with natural calamities. If lessons can be learnt from the history of statecraft and warfare, nations at a lower ebb of vulnerability can invite aggression from vested interests. Like the other arms of service, Pakistan Navy (PN) not only maintains constant vigil but also keeps its powder dry to meet any challenge head on. Organizing and participating in military exercises remains a time-tested method of honing the skills and being prepared to defend the motherland.

Pakistan Army and Air Force have recently conducted bilateral and multilateral exercises to enhance their preparedness and share the experiences of other forces. PN, besides conducting domestic exercises, has a decade and a half old tradition of hosting a biennial Multinational Exercise titled Aman, to demonstrate Pakistan's commitment to peace, contribute towards regional maritime security and enhance interoperability between regional and extra regional navies, particularly against asymmetric threats. The initiative taken by PN was not examined in the backdrop of the prevailing global maritime milieu, which remains fraught with challenges from traditional and non-traditional threats. Despite the advancements in

airborne and land platforms for the conduct of trade and commerce, the oceans, which continue to serve as the highways of global economy, also provide attractive avenues for illegal activities such as piracy, human smuggling and arms as well as drug trafficking in bulk. The still prevailing threat of terrorism also makes the maritime arena happy hunting ground for the harbingers of violence, chaos and mayhem. Being a responsible maritime state, Pakistan has always endeavored to contribute towards regional peace and stability. In addition to participating in bilateral and multilateral exercises, Pakistan's commitment to the principle of 'peaceful coexistence' and desire for greater regional harmony and cooperation is also reflected through its armed forces' participation in UN

Peacekeeping missions and UN mandated Combined Maritime Task Forces 150 & 151, which PN has had the honor to command on numerous occasions in rotation. In this environment, PN's multilateral exercise Aman has gained significance by becoming a major international level event, which is evident from the growing number of participations despite the challenges of COVID-19. To date, six exercises have been conducted while the seventh exercise has been planned to be launched in February 2021. All previous naval exercises of the Aman series were participated wholly by navies of friendly countries, ushering goodwill to Pakistan, but have also resulted in all participants including the host PN, gaining tremendous professional experience.

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## A new US President

**D**ESPITE the riots, claims of election fraud and an insurrection which took the lives of five Americans, it appears that the peaceful transition of power will continue to be a process upheld in the United States of America, as it inaugurates its 46th president. Albeit it must be noted that this time, the change will be accompanied by over 25,000 National Guard troops securing the capital, five times as many troops as there are in Afghanistan and Iraq. This fact is an indicator of many things—it shows that the division in the US society has increased to such levels that security akin to the extent used in foreign invasions is now required to keep calm in the US Congress and the White House. It is also an attestation to the fact that the two-decades-long US intervention in the Middle East is now finally nearing an end. The mood in Washington is less ceremonial—apart from the riot on January 6, the President-Elect faces a whole host of problems. The pandemic is still raging, and has affected the US more than most parts of the world. Biden also has to make many fundamental decisions on foreign policy—one of the biggest casualties of the Trump administration was its disastrous relationship with Iran. For the sake of world peace, this needs to be sorted out, as Iran also tries to leverage its way onto better conditions for a deal. The US Presidency affects all countries—Pakistan too has a stake as the US prepares to leave Afghanistan near our borders. As security priorities of the US change and it requires Pakistan's facilitation of the peace process, we too must use the opportunity for better relations to improve trade ties. Both the US and Pakistan serve to benefit from bilateral trade, an area which has suffered because of the pandemic. As the US turns a new page, one which promises to be vastly different from the Trump administration, Islamabad too must identify areas of cooperation to build better and more mutually-beneficial ties with the new US administration.

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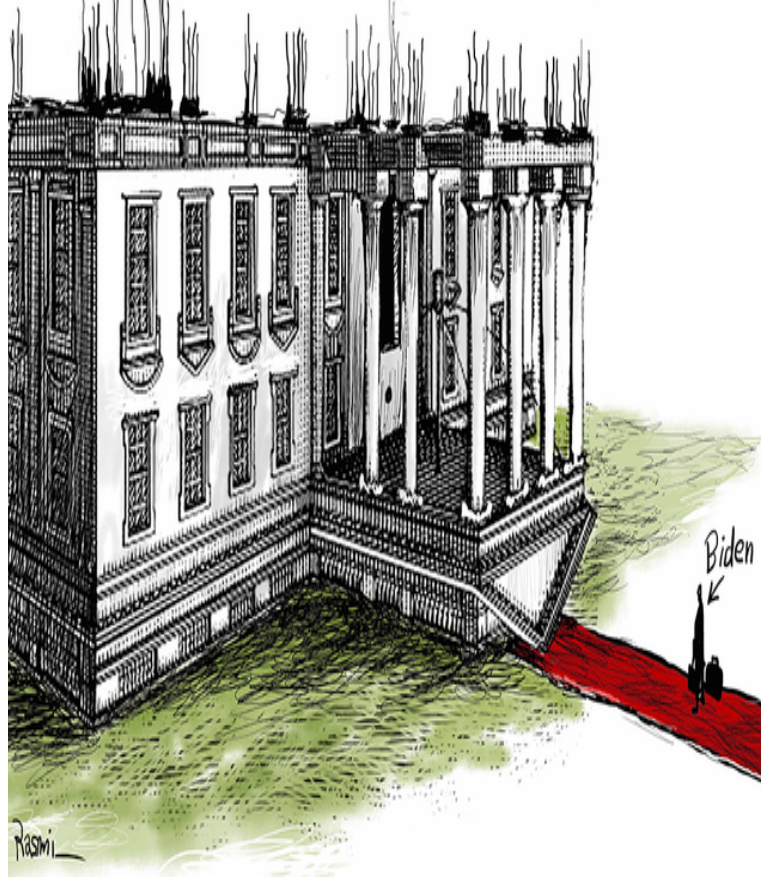
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## Digital policy

**A** Much needed new and comprehensive digital policy has been approved for implementation by the Balochistan cabinet. It was about time that the digital divide was bridged through increasing the province's capacity. While a major milestone was achieved through this initiative, there is still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to allow for the policy to fully materialise. Private industries must be incentivised to invest and tangible goals for development must be set by the provincial government. Only through unwavering effort and commitment to this policy will Balochistan actually see its benefits. According to officials, the goal of the policy is to create an advanced centralised data centre, aid e-governance, improve internet connection, facilitate the digital economy, expand access to digital services for the public and invite ICT companies to establish operations within the region. If the government is able to successfully pull this off, there is no doubt that the digital capacity of the province will increase dramatically, bringing it up to a platform of development that it has never experienced before. However, it is important to note that such massive schemes require finance and skills that the private sector can provide. As such, the government must seek the help of companies to inspire technological development in Balochistan especially once the issuing of new spectrum licenses begins nationally. This is bound to increase the pace of development and create a whole new host of opportunities, like employment, for the Balochi population. Furthermore, this digital policy could also become more functional if the authorities incorporate various objectives or infrastructural requirements that must be achieved in a timely manner. This will kickstart processes and allow for national bodies to track progress, identify grey areas and rectify them, and help create new goals through expanding the policy by incorporating new initiatives. Considering that the government is acting to fix the long-standing issue of digital divide and a lack of development within the province, surely such steps to maintain the momentum of development will be adopted wholeheartedly in time.

## Uzbekistan - the center of Ziyarat tourism

Uffaq Khalid



Uzbekistan is home to dignified Islamic scholars and Saints. Imam Al-Bukhari, Al-Hakim At-Termizi, Sheikh-ul-Islam Al-Marghinani, Imam Maturidi and Bahauddin Naqshband are the few dignified figures of Uzbekistan. These scholars made invaluable contribution to the hadith collection and interpretation of Quran and left a rich heritage of Islamic knowledge. Uzbekistan is a land of famous scientists that are known all around the globe

**I**N East, "Ziyarat" refers to a form of pilgrimage to Holy sites associated with the dignitaries and venerated personalities. Ziyarat tourism is rapidly growing across Muslim countries every year. Uzbekistan is a basket, full of history, diverse cultural heritage and vibrant colors. Located in the heart of Central Asia, the country belongs to two major rivers: Amudarya and Syrdarya. Uzbekistan occupies a significant place in combining the Islamic values and human civilization. It is one of the eminent countries, played a pivotal role to the propagation of Islamic culture. The cultural revival and preservation of sacred sites is evidence in this regard. Uzbekistan is home to dignified Islamic scholars and Saints. Imam Al-Bukhari, Al-Hakim At-Termizi, Sheikh-ul-Islam Al-Marghinani, Imam Maturidi and Bahauddin Naqshband are the few dignified figures of Uzbekistan. These scholars made invaluable contribution to the hadith collection and interpretation of Quran and left a rich heritage of Islamic knowledge. Uzbekistan is a land of famous scientists that are known all around the globe. Ibn Sina, Al-Biruni and Al-Khorezmi are the few prominent names who rendered remarkable services in the fields of philosophy, physics, astronomy and medicine. The Uzbek culture is deeply infused with the history of the Silk Road. The famous oasis towns of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and Tashkent are the hotspots of tourism in Uzbekistan. The ancient Shrines, monuments and architectures, which belong to diverse religions, are still preserved in the country.

Ziyarat tourism is steadily increasing in Uzbekistan. In recent years, several measures are being taken to develop pilgrim/ ziyarat tourism in the country. Tourism websites, memorandums of cooperation on Ziyarat tourism, and special flights for the pilgrims are the few initiatives that have been taken by the Uzbek government to further promote Ziyarat tourism. A visa-free regime has been launched in 2018 for the people of Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey to avoid official delays. The Prophet Daniel Old Testament, Mausoleum in the tomb of Imam Bukhari, the Ottoman Quran, Kara-Tepa and Fayaz-Tepa are the distinguished holy sites for the pilgrims from all around the world. Bukhara hosted the first International Forum on ziyarat tourism in 2019, where Uzbekistan was recognized as the center of ziyarat tourism. According to the Global Muslim travel Index, Uzbekistan is listed among the ten most attractive countries among the member states of OIC. Pakistan and Uzbekistan share the 25 years of diplomatic relations and they have deep cultural and historical roots. Their relation dates back to the independence of Uzbekistan as Pakistan was among those countries that first recognized the independence of Uzbekistan. Since then, the two countries are closely collaborating on multilateral forums for the well-being and stability of the entire region. In the War against Terror, Uzbekistan always stood by Pakistan and acknowledged globally the services and sacrifices rendered by the people of Pakistan. Pak-Uzbek cordial relations have been further strengthening in recent times because of the rise to bi-

lateral tourism and joint efforts to bring harmony in the entire region. Since 2019, the tourism co-operation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan are reaching their highest levels. The initiative of Ziyarat Tourism by the Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev is receiving special admiration from the international tourism market. In 2020, the Uzbek Embassy in Pakistan presented a certificate of awarding the title of Ambassador of Ziyarat Tourism to the son of leader of the Naqshbandi tariqa teaching in Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Pir Muhammad Naqib-ur-Rehman, Pir Muhammad Hasib-ur-Rehman. The newly appointed Honorary Ambassador appreciated the efforts of Uzbek government that are being made to retain the Islamic heritage and assured to promote ziyarat tourism in Pakistan. Pakistan, being an important trade juncture, is working day and night towards building access to the Central Asian markets and enhancing regional connectivity. In the plethora of such initiatives, there is a ray of hope for the advancement of Pak-Uzbek relations in the coming years. With the special focus on bilateral trade and cultural harmony, both countries can play a crucial role in fostering peace process and economic revival in the region. For more than two centuries, Uzbekistan has been bewitching the tourists with its magnificent architecture and holy relics. This showstopper of Central Asia is ready to inspire, host and spellbound the visitors through its cultural heritage.

– Uffaq Khalid is Research Associate at Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (IICR)

## Will Biden make America great again?

Marwan Bishara



Biden's cabinet picks show a great deal of cultural and gender diversity, albeit from within the establishment. If policy is indeed shaped by official appointments, the new administration shows some promise. Of course, many Democrats would have liked to see the likes of Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in the new administration

**T**HE way forward for the new Biden administration cannot be the way back. Harking back to the Obama era and stacking his administration with "Obamians" will not suffice to restore America's credibility and leadership. As president of the United States, Joe Biden has to look further, aim higher, and act bigger. It is important for Biden to reverse much of Donald Trump's policies, but that will not erase his legacy or undo the damage to America's soul. Certainly not when the bitter and vengeful former president and his allies continue to lurk around in the shadows. Trump's authoritarian attempts to restore white supremacy have thankfully failed miserably, mainly because America has moved on. But he did succeed in causing so much damage to the fabric of American society and democracy that it will take years to clean up. That is why Biden will have to tread carefully, addressing the social and economic grievances of the Republican base without alienating his own Democratic base. Democrats have long run and won elections on the promise of cleaning up a Republican mess. From Franklin D Roosevelt's (FDR) 1933 victory amid the Great Depression and John F Kennedy's 1961 ascendance following the late 1950s economic recession, to Barack Obama's historic triumph following the Iraq war and the 2008 financial meltdown, Democratic presidents have repeatedly faced the challenge of restoring US prosperity and leadership. And somewhat succeeded. Such selective reading of the past century may be all too self-righteous, but never have Democrats and liberals, including liberal Republicans, shown as much enthusiasm for turning the page on a Republican presidency as they do today. Biden's cabinet picks show a great deal of cultural and gender diversity, albeit from within the establishment. If policy is indeed shaped by official appointments, the new administration shows some promise. Of course, many Democrats would have liked to see the likes of Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in the new administration, but my guess is, Biden hopes to work with traditional and liberal Republicans in order to end the Trumpist mindset that divided the

country. This would prove controversial and even alienate many progressive Democrats, but it could potentially widen the rift within the Republican Party and improve the Democrats' position come midterm elections. Biden already committed to reverse a plethora of Trump's executive orders on his first day in office, including lifting the "Muslim Ban" and rejoining the Paris climate accord. He will also try to move rapidly to fix Trump's shameful and deadly pandemic record by issuing new directives to combat the coronavirus. These are important steps that signal his seriousness to turn the page on the Trump era, but not enough to reckon with his legacy and tackle America's social and racial injustices that elevated him to the presidency. That is why Biden needs to go beyond what Obama did after the calamitous years of the Bush presidency. He must design a new American covenant along the lines of FDR's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. He could start by embracing and implementing a wide-ranging national revival programme that follows FDR's three Rs: relief for the many unemployed through direct government support; recovery through greater infrastructural investments and market subsidies; and reform of the economy through regulations and welfare programmes. Addressing poverty and inequality is indispensable for tackling the deeper more contentious issues of racial and societal tensions that are dividing and paralyzing America. Needless to say, a struggling, divided and unstable America is an America that is unfit to lead the world. Its attraction, as the cliché goes, comes not only from the example of its power, but the power of its example, as a stable, democratic and prosperous superpower. So once Biden restores what he calls the "soul of American" – its democratic civility, economic vitality and political liberality – he will be able to proceed with restoring its credibility. Reinstating American leadership will require rebuilding alliances, strengthening global institutions and upholding international agreements, which Trump abandoned.

Unfortunately, many among America's allies, like its European and South Asian partners, have already moved on. They have begun to shape their own autonomous security structures and some have even signed new trade deals with China. Although they are pleased with the changes in Washington and with America reengaging with the world in a responsible diplomatic fashion, America's closest allies will not rush to embrace US leadership as in the past and will not be swayed by mere sweet talk or hollow assurances. Biden will have to work harder than his predecessors to regain their trust. He will also need to accept more equitable transatlantic and transpacific relationships based on mutual respect and mutual interest. These alliances are indispensable for America to deal with, not to say stand up to, a rising China and emboldened Russia, its two greatest challenges in the decades to come. When it comes to great power politics, Biden will have to restore that which distinguished America from its rivals, albeit at times selectively and cynically, i.e. its emphasis on and promotion of human rights and democratic values. And nowhere is this as urgent as it is in the Middle East, where the Trump administration has abandoned all that is politically legal, decent and humane. Biden must put human rights at the centre of America's regional policy. This begins by pressuring America's clients, Saudi Arabia and Israel, to end the war in Yemen and the occupation of Palestine, respectively. Returning to the Iran nuclear deal is commendable and necessary, but it must go hand-in-hand with ensuring Iranian respect for human rights and legal norms. As the region's self-appointed guardian superpower, America shares responsibility for the civil wars in Syria and Libya, which Obama enabled and Trump left to fester. Biden says America is shaped by a constant battle between its better angels and darkest impulses. This is also true for foreign policy. It is high time for its better angels to prevail in America and beyond.

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

## Briefs

## 1m vaccine doses to be available

From Page 01

He added the country had the capacity to procure 20 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine. He said that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) had granted emergency use authorization (EUA) to two different vaccines for protection against COVID-19 in the country after evaluation included AstraZeneca and SinoPharm. He said that besides these two approved vaccines, a team of experts had also mentioned eight to nine other vaccines for possible use in Pakistan. He however said that these two approved vaccines were shortlisted and granted EUA with certain conditions as earlier both vaccines were evaluated for their safety and quality.

He said that the Cansino vaccine is in the third stage of clinical trials in Pakistan. The trial is being carried out in five centres out of which three have completed it and begun analysing results. Results will be available by early February, he added. He said that Sinopharm had proved to be around 80% effective in clinical trials being carried out in different countries.

## Pak desires to deepen its ties with EU

From Page 01

successful and has also led to an increase in economic activity in the country including exports. He stressed that the global community must come together to combat the virus and should realize that nobody is safe till everyone is safe.

Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed satisfaction at the trade and investment relations between Pakistan and the European Union. He also appreciated the continuation of GSP Plus status to Pakistan. The Foreign Minister highlighted the positive outlook of Pakistan's economy. He added that the growing economic trajectory coupled with extensive natural resources offered huge opportunities for enhanced trade, investment, and tourism.

The Foreign Minister stressed the importance of economic and cultural diplomacy and called for deeper engagement between Pakistan and the European Union in these spheres. The Foreign Minister also briefed the EU ambassadors regarding regional situation. He highlighted the grave human rights situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) and underscored the importance of peaceful solution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant UN resolutions. The Foreign Minister dilated upon Pakistan's positive contributions to the Afghan peace process and facilitative role in advancing the cause of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan, region and beyond. The EU Ambassadors appreciated the initiative which provided an opportunity for in-depth exchange of views on areas of mutual interest. The importance of closer engagement on Pakistan-EU relations and regional and international issues was underscored.

## 'I was looking forward to receive criticism'

KARACHI: Pakistan's batting coach Younis Khan has revealed that he was looking forward to receiving criticism after Pakistan's batting failure in the series against New Zealand. Head coach Misbah-ul-Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis was under severe criticism after a poor show by the team in New Zealand, however, batting legend Younis got less judgment on batsmen errors. "I heard criticism on Waqar and Misbah-ul-Haq but there was no analysis on me. Accountability by critics is a must and I should also be criticised after Pakistan's batting failure in New Zealand," Younis told reporters in a virtual presser. "I wished to appear before PCB's cricket committee where we could have addressed my faults and have a discussion on the betterment. Critics can judge my performances too, they are welcome to do this," he added.



DOHA: Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force calling on Major General Salim Hamed Eqail Al-Nabel, commander Qatar Air Force, during his 3 day visit to Qatar. – DNA

## US to keep embassy in Jerusalem: Biden's top diplomat

"The only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state and to give the Palestinians a state to which they are entitled is through the so-called two-state solution," Blinken said

## FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden will keep the US embassy in Israel in Jerusalem, his nominee for secretary of state affirmed at his Senate confirmation hearing. "Do you agree that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and do you commit that the United States will keep our embassy in Jerusalem?" asked Republican Senator

Ted Cruz of Texas. "Yes and Yes," said Antony Blinken in testimony on Tuesday. Outgoing President Donald Trump announced the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. The US moved its embassy to Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in May of the following year. Jerusalem remains at the heart of the decades-long Middle East conflict, with the Palestinian Authority (PA) insisting that East Jerusalem – illegally occupied by Israel since

1967 – should serve as the capital of a Palestinian state. "The only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state and to give the Palestinians a state to which they are entitled is through the so-called two-state solution," Blinken said. "I think realistically, it's hard to see near-term prospects for moving forward on that. What would be important is to make sure that neither party takes steps that make the already difficult process

even more challenging," he added. There has been no comment yet from the Palestinian leadership. Lama Khater, a journalist based in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron, wrote in a Twitter post: "Everything is subject to change in the agendas of successive US administrations, except for absolute loyalty to Israel". The Trump administration has been unabashed in its open support for Israel. The past four years have entrenched US

favouritism for Israel through policies such as cutting off US aid to the PA and withdrawing funding to the UN refugee agency on which millions of Palestinians depend for education, food and livelihoods. Going against international consensus, the Trump administration recognised Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem and the occupied Golan Heights and declared that settlement building is not illegal.

### KKR buy stake in US-based Major League Cricket

MUMBAI: Indian Premier League team Kolkata Knight Riders, co-owned by popular Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, has picked up a stake in the city-based Major League Cricket in the United States, the Twenty20 league has said. The inaugural season of MLC, featuring six franchises, is expected to commence in 2022. It will be the third T20 league to see the involvement of the Knight Riders Group, which also owns the Trinbago Knight Riders in the Caribbean Premier League. The Trinbago Knight Riders won their fourth CPL title in the last six seasons during an unbeaten championship in 2020, while KKR have won two IPL titles. "For several years now, we have been expanding the Knight Riders brand globally and closely watching the potential for T20 cricket in the USA," Khan said in a statement. "We are convinced that Major League Cricket has all the pieces in place to execute on its plans and we look forward to making our partnership an enormous success in the coming years. – DNA

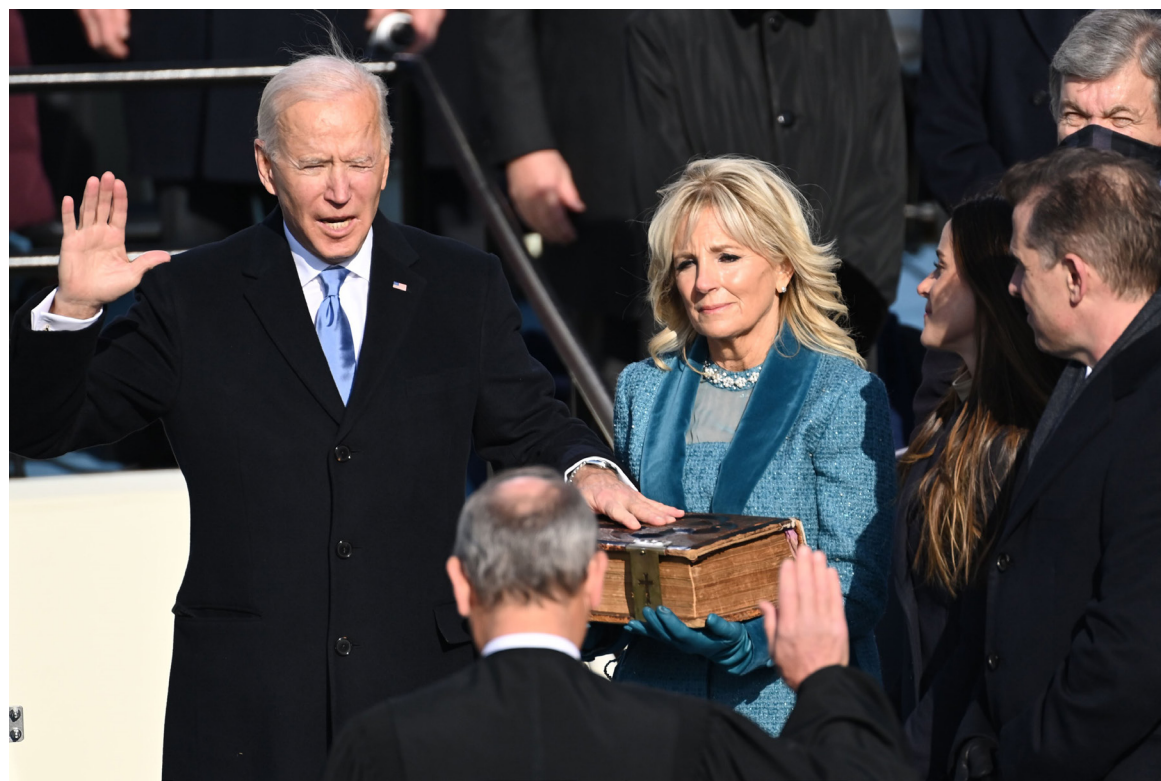
## Israeli tanks target Gaza Strip for second night

## FOREIGN DESK

GAZA: Israeli tank fire struck a number of sites in the Gaza Strip, including a residential home, in the second night of attacks on the coastal enclave. Local Palestinian sources said there were no casualties from the Israeli artillery barrage, but material damage was done to a house located in the Maghazi refugee camp on Tuesday night. Abu Mazen Abdel-Jawad's family of five were sleeping when Israeli tanks targeted a room built on the roof of their three-storey home.

A relative of the family, Tayseer Abdel-Jawad, told Palestinian news agency Maan the roof of the house caved in, but the family survived unscathed. "The bombing caused great damage inside the house," he said. "The family miraculously escaped certain death." Israeli tanks also targeted observation points and locations east of Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, and Deir Al-Balah. According to the Israeli army, the tanks fired on Hamas positions after a rocket was fired from the Palestinian enclave towards Israel. "Late in the evening, a rocket was launched from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory," the

army said in a statement on WhatsApp. "In response, Israeli tanks struck Hamas positions" in the south of the Gaza Strip. An earlier military statement said warning sirens were not activated in built-up areas, indicating the projectile fell on open ground. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Hamas – Gaza's rulers – did not claim responsibility for the rocket fire, but Israel holds it responsible for any attacks from Gaza. Early on Monday, two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip towards the coastal city of Ashdod with Israeli military sources indicating they dropped into the Mediterranean Sea.



WASHINGTON: Joe Biden taking oath as 46th president of United States of America. – Agencies

## Bangladesh win over Windies in first ODI

## SPORTS DESK

DHAKA: Shakib Al Hasan claimed four wickets for eight runs in his international comeback to set up an easy six-wicket victory for Bangladesh over West Indies in the first one-day international in Dhaka on Wednesday. Debutant pacer Hasan Mahmud also impressed with the ball, picking up 3-28 as the hosts bowled out the weakened tourists for 122 before racing to 125-4 in 33.5 overs. Skipper Tamim Iqbal top-scored with 44 off 69 while all-rounder Shakib played his part with the bat, hitting

19. Left-arm spinner Akeel Hossain took 3-26 to give the home batsmen some trouble but his effort was not enough to defend the visitors' meagre total. Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad were unbeaten on 19 and nine runs respectively to complete the win, helping Bangladesh take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Opting to bowl first, Bangladesh earlier wrapped up the West Indies innings in 32.2 overs. "No complaints, we bowled extremely well. Not just the spinners, but the pacers as well," said Tamim at the prize-giving ceremony.

## PM Imran vows to make Waziristan prosperous

From Page 01

development in South Waziristan, an area that had long suffered the brunt of terrorism. The Prime Minister mentioned that internet access in south Waziristan was previously denied due to security situation with the major apprehension that technology could be used by miscreants backed by India. However, he said, after consultations with Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa and ISI chief Lt.Gen. Faiz Hameed on security clearance, it was decided to launch the services to facilitate the residents, particularly students as most educational institutions had initiated online classes. Imran Khan said the vision of his government was to uplift the underprivileged areas of S.Waziristan and provide best opportunities to the local population in education, health and employment. He regretted that tribal areas suffered immensely due to militancy in the past and said it was the time to compensate them by offering them facilities in all spheres of life. He termed the youth as "biggest asset" of the country and stressed that technical education would help them gain capabilities to meet the challenges of contemporary world. For the uplift of tribal youth, he said employment opportunities would be provided to them for their mainstreaming in national development process. He said additional funds would be diverted for S.Waziristan under Kamyab Jawan Programme, aimed at ensuring self-reliance of youth. Imran Khan acknowledged tremendous sacrifice of the tribal people for the soil, dating back to their resistance during British Raj and fighting for the freedom of Kashmiris in 1947. He paid tributes to locals for supporting him in materializing the difficult task of merger of tribal areas with Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, adding the time would prove that it was the best decision for them.

## Thai govt files royal insult complaint

BANGKOK: Thailand's government on Wednesday filed a criminal complaint of defaming the monarchy against a banned opposition politician after he criticised the country's COVID-19 vaccine strategy. The move could mark the highest-profile lese majeste case since a wave of anti-government protests emerged last year and extended to criticism of King Maha Vajiralongkorn over accusations of meddling in politics and taking too much power. The complaint against Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit under Article 112 of the criminal code came two days after he said the government was too reliant on a company owned by the Crown Property Bureau, which is under the king's personal control, to produce vaccines for Thais. Lese majeste in Thailand punishes defaming or insulting the king by up to 15 years in prison. Government officials who filed the complaint told reporters Thanathorn had defamed the monarchy by linking it to the vaccine strategy. "Thanathorn distorted facts and caused misunderstanding among people," Suporn Atthawong, a minister in the prime minister's office, told reporters. "He violated the monarchy, which upset Thai people who love and protect the monarchy." The complaint, which also included a cyber crime accusation of uploading false information, came after Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who took power in a 2014 military coup, vowed on Tuesday to prosecute "distorted" information about the vaccine strategy. – APP

## Libya: UN chief urges foreign fighters to leave by Saturday

After a NATO-led uprising in 2011 that overthrew and later killed hardline leader Muammar Gaddafi, Libya was divided between the rival administrations in the east and west, each backed by an array of militias and foreign powers

NEW YORK: The UN chief urged the departure of all foreign fighters and mercenaries from Libya by Saturday as called for in the October 23 ceasefire agreement signed by the warring sides after years of fighting split the oil-rich North African nation in two. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also urged the UN-recognised government that holds sway in the capital, Tripoli, in western Libya and the forces of renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar who runs most of the east and the south, "to maintain their resolve in reaching a lasting political solution to the conflict, resolving economic issues, and alleviating the humanitarian situation". In a report to the UN Security Council obtained on Tuesday, Guterres welcomed the road map adopted by the Libyan Political

Dialogue Forum – 75 representatives from the country's political and social spectrum – leading to presidential and parliamentary elections on December 24, 2021. After a NATO-led uprising in 2011 that overthrew and later killed hardline leader Muammar Gaddafi, Libya was divided between the rival administrations in the east and west, each backed by an array of militias and foreign powers. Turkey is the main patron of the Tripoli government, while the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt back Haftar. Guterres encouraged countries backing both sides and the broader international community to support implementation of the ceasefire "without delay", including "ensuring the departure of all foreign fighters and mer-

cenaries from Libya and the full and unconditional respect of the Security Council arms embargo" against Libya. He also urged the Security Council to give the UN political mission, known as UNSMIL, "a clear but flexible mandate" to support a Libyan-led mechanism to monitor implementation of the ceasefire. Diplomats said a Council resolution outlining the UN role will likely be circulated in late January or early February. In early January, Guterres recommended that international monitors be deployed to Libya under a UN umbrella to observe the October ceasefire agreement from a base in the strategic city of Sirte, the gateway to the country's main oil fields and export terminals. He said an advance team should be

sent to Tripoli as a first step to "provide the foundations for a scalable United Nations ceasefire monitoring mechanism based in Sirte". The secretary-general expressed concern at the continuing threat of "terrorism and violent extremism" in the Libyan region, saying reunifying the country's security institutions would contribute "to mitigating the risk" of ISIL (ISIS) and other armed groups reconstituting. "Though operationally weakened as a result of a series of counterterrorism operations, the Islamic State ... and a support network of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) remain a threat in Libya," he said. Guterres said the role of UN member nations and regional organisations, including the African Union, European Union

and Arab League "is critical". Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit told the Security Council on Monday that recent events "could bring us closer to ending the division in this important Arab country". He pressed for foreign fighters and mercenaries to be removed by Saturday's deadline, and urged a solution to the threat posed by armed groups and militias. Aboul-Gheit warned unless this happens "the country will not enjoy any stability nor will any agreement on the transitional phase and the preparation for the upcoming elections survive". He pledged Arab League support to the UN in monitoring the ceasefire and in preparing for and observing December's elections. – APP

## Briefs

## Chinese mainland reports 88 new cases

BEIJING: The Chinese mainland on Tuesday reported 103 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 88 locally transmitted cases and 15 arriving from outside the mainland, the National Health Commission said Wednesday. Of the locally transmitted cases, 46 were reported in Jilin, 19 in Hebei, 16 in Heilongjiang, and seven in Beijing, the commission said in its daily report. No suspected cases or deaths related to the disease were reported on Tuesday, said the commission. By the end of Tuesday, the mainland had reported 4,545 imported COVID-19 cases. Among them, 4,269 had been discharged from hospitals following recovery, and 276 remained hospitalized. No deaths had been reported among the imported cases.

## UK strain detected in at least 60 countries: WHO

GENEVA: The UK coronavirus strain has been detected in at least 60 countries, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, 10 more than a week ago. With the global death toll now well past two million, and new variants of the virus causing deep concern, countries across the world are grappling with how to slow infections until vaccines become widely available. The South African strain, which like the UK one is believed to be more infectious, has now been reported in 23 countries and territories, the WHO also announced in its weekly update. It added that the number of new deaths climbed to a record high of 93,000 over the previous seven days, with 4.7 million new cases reported over the same period. The UK strain, first detected in mid-December, is thought by the WHO to be between 50 and 70 percent more infectious than the original. While more transmissible, the two variants are not thought to be more deadly and Pfizer and German partner BioNTech have said their vaccines are effective against the mutation found on the British virus variant, known as B.1.1.7. The arrival of mass vaccination campaigns in the US and Europe had brought hope that the end of the pandemic was in sight; the European Union said Tuesday it was aiming to inoculate 70 percent of its adult population before the end of August. But many EU countries - and other nations including India and Russia - have struggled to get their inoculation programmes off the ground. The United States remains home to the world's worst outbreak in overall numbers, and US President-elect Joe Biden made clear he would be taking no chances following his inauguration on Wednesday.

## India's COVID tally rises to 10,595,660

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 tally rose to 10,595,660 on Wednesday as 13,823 new cases were registered during the past 24 hours, said the latest data from the federal health ministry. According to the official data, the death toll mounted to 152,718 with 162 new deaths. There are still 197,201 active cases in the country, while 10,245,741 people have been discharged from hospitals after medical treatment. This is the first time in the past several months when the number of active cases in the country fell below the 200,000-mark. Meanwhile, the federal government has ramped up testing facilities across the country, as over 180 million tests have been conducted so far. As many as 188,566,947 tests were conducted till Tuesday, out of which 764,120 tests were conducted on Tuesday alone, said the latest data issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Wednesday. The national capital New Delhi, one of the most affected places in the country, has been witnessing comparatively a lesser number of cases over the past several months as 231 new cases and 10 deaths were registered in the national capital through Tuesday. - APP



BAKU: President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva visited the Alley of Martyrs on the 31st anniversary of the 20 January tragedy which was committed by the Soviet empire in Baku. President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva paid tribute to those who gave their lives for the country's freedom. - DNA

# Azerbaijan marks 31st anniversary of Black Jan

The first political-legal recognition of the January 20 tragedy came on March 29, 1994, when Azerbaijan's legislative body Milli Majlis adopted a relevant resolution on national leader Heydar Aliyev's initiative

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan marks the 31st anniversary of Black January, namely the brutal killing of over 140 people and wounding of hundreds of civilians by the Soviet army in capital Baku and outskirts on January 20, 1990. This epochal event was the deciding factor in forming Azerbaijani national identity and marked a turning point in restoring national independence. It was the January tragedy that turned a national liberation movement into political reality and gave a strong impetus to the Azerbaijani people's struggle for independence. On the night of January 19-20, under direct instructions from Mikhail Gorbachev, the then General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, military units from the USSR Defence Ministry, State Security Committee and Interior Ministry entered Baku and nearby regions, massacring the civilian population using heavy military equipment and other various forms of weaponry. The Soviet army deployed a large contingent of special and internal troops in Baku who displayed unprecedented cruelty against the peaceful population. The army had brutally killed 82 civilians and severely wounded 20 others until a curfew was announced. Several days after the curfew was announced,



21 more civilians were murdered in Baku. Eight more civilians were killed in areas where a curfew had not been imposed, on January 25 in Neftchala and on January 26 in Lankaran. As a result of the January tragedy, 147 civilians were killed and 744 more were wounded in Baku and nearby regions. Among those killed were women, children and the elderly, medical employees and policemen. Mass arrests accompanied the illegal deployment of troops and the subsequent military intervention. A total of 841 civilians were arrested in Baku and other cities and regions of the republic, 112 of whom were sent to prisons in different cities of the USSR. The Soviet troops fired on 200 homes, 80 cars and set fire to a large number of public and private property, including ambulances. The first political-legal recognition of the January 20 tragedy came on March 29, 1994,

when Azerbaijan's legislative body Milli Majlis adopted a relevant resolution on national leader Heydar Aliyev's initiative. The resolution read: "The deployment of the Soviet troops in the city of Baku and several other regions and the brutal killing of civilians, with the intent to suppress, to break the confidence and will of a people who by peaceful means demanded a new democratic and sovereign state and to humiliate their national identity as a show of Soviet army power must be regarded as a military aggression and crime of the totalitarian communist regime against the people of Azerbaijan." The Azerbaijani people continue to hold the memories of the martyrs dear to their hearts. On January 20 of each year, thousands of people visit the Alley of Martyrs to pay their tributes by laying flowers, say prayers for the victims and express their condemnation of the perpetrators of the tragedy. Each year at midday on January 20, a nationwide moment of silence is observed to commemorate January 20 martyrs. Ships, cars, and trains sound sirens throughout the country, commemorative events are held in all cities and towns, and the national flag is lowered on all buildings. In its recent statement this year, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry commented on factors that stipulated the strengthening determination of the Azerbaijani nation to get independent from the Soviet Union.

## Greece optimistic over talks with Turkey

WEB DESK

ATHENS: Greece will approach talks with Turkey next week over their disputed territorial claims in a hopeful spirit but will not discuss issues it considers as sovereign rights, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on Wednesday. Mitsotakis was speaking ahead of a parliamentary vote on a bill extending Greece's western territorial waters to 12 nautical miles from six currently, days before NATO allies Greece and Turkey resume exploratory talks over contested maritime claims in the Aegean. The talks are set to begin in Istanbul on Jan. 25, after a four-year pause. "We

will attend with optimism, self-confidence," Mitsotakis said, but there would be "zero naivety" from Athens about the talks, which were unofficial and non-binding. "There will be no discussion on national sovereignty," he added. He said the discussions were expected to resume at the point where they were interrupted in 2016. Ankara and Athens held 60 rounds of talks from 2002 to 2016, but plans last year for a resumption foundered over a survey vessel that Turkey sent into disputed waters and disagreements over topics to be covered. The latter issue remains unresolved, as Greece only wants to discuss the demarcation of maritime zones in the Aegean and the Mediterranean.

## Egypt, Qatar agree on resuming diplomatic ties

FOREIGN DESK

CAIRO: Egypt and Qatar have agreed to resume diplomatic relations, the Egyptian foreign ministry said on Wednesday. The move follows an agreement between Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt earlier this month to end their boycott of Qatar - a move taken in 2017 over allegations it supported terrorism, a charge that Doha denies. "Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Qatar exchanged, today, January 20, 2021, two official memoranda, in virtue of which the two countries agreed to resume diplomatic relations," a foreign ministry statement said. Egypt reopened its airspace to Qatari flights on Jan. 12 and flights between the two countries were resumed. When the boycott was announced, Egypt and its allies called on Qatar to cut ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, among other demands. The Islamist group was outlawed in Egypt after then-army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi led the overthrow of the

## Iran welcomes Qatar call to engage Gulf states

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif welcomed Qatar's call on Gulf states to engage in a dialogue with the Islamic Republic and to broker negotiations. "As we have consistently emphasized, the solution to our challenges lies in collaboration to jointly form a 'strong region': peaceful, stable, prosperous & free from global or regional hegemony," Zarif said on Wednesday on Twitter. Zarif's comments came after Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said on Monday his government was "hopeful" Iran and its Arab neighbours could resume talks. Qatar, which shares a major gas field with Iran, has for years called on Gulf Arab states to enter talks with Iran, which they accuse of fomenting unrest in the Middle East - accusations Tehran denies. - DNA

Brotherhood's Mohamed Mursi in the presidency in 2013, before being elected president himself the following year. Much of the group's senior leadership was jailed in Egypt but other members took refuge abroad in Qatar or its regional ally Turkey. Egypt and the UAE have also found themselves at odds with Turkey and Qatar in Libya, where they have backed opposing

factions in a civil conflict. A Qatari foreign ministry official pledged to Egypt during a meeting with officials from Egypt and UAE on Saturday that his country will change the policy of its al-Jazeera television channel towards Cairo, two Egyptian intelligence sources told. He also pledged that Doha would not intervene in Egypt's internal affairs, they added.

## Russia sends additional equipment to Azerbaijan

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: A group of pyrotechnics of Russia's Ministry of Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters, together with employees of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan, continues the operation to clear the Azerbaijani lands liberated from Armenian occupation, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan told Trend. In order to further increase the efficiency of the demining operation, within the framework of established close cooperation between the two ministries, the Russian Emergencies Ministry delivered an additional pyrotechnic group, machinery and equipment to Azerbaijan on January 18. The group, machinery and equipment that arrived in the country by flight were met by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Emergency Situations at the Ganja airport and delivered for demining to the ministry's Karabakh regional center.

## Trump pardons 73 people on last day

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday pardoned 73 people, including his former aide Steve Bannon and other allies, just hours before he was due to leave office. The list of those pardoned - as well as 70 others whose sentences were commuted - was released by the White House in a statement during the early hours. Neither Trump nor his relatives were on the list. Bannon had been charged with, and pleaded not guilty to, defrauding people over funds raised to build the Mexico border wall, a flagship Trump policy. He was Trump's campaign manager during the 2016 election, before becoming a senior adviser to the president. He left the White House acrimoniously in 2017, Trump later giving him the derogatory moniker "Stoopy Steve." - APP

## UK inflation jumps in December

LONDON: Britain's annual inflation rate jumped in December partly on higher transport costs as Covid restrictions temporarily eased, official data showed Wednesday. The rate, as measured by the UK's Consumer Prices Index, rose to 0.6 percent last month from 0.3 percent in November, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. Analysts' consensus forecasts had been for a rise to 0.5 percent. "Transport costs... as well as petrol prices rose as some travel restrictions eased," ONS statistician Jonathan Athow said of December's inflation increase. "These were partially offset by falling food prices," he added. Much of the UK has meanwhile returned to strict lockdown measures since the start of January to cope with an upsurge in coronavirus cases. - APP

## Macron rules out apology for colonial abuses in Algeria

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has ruled out issuing an official apology for abuses in Algeria, his office said Wednesday, ahead of a major report on how France is facing up to its colonial past in the country. There will "no repentance nor apologies" for the occupation of Algeria or the bloody eight-year war that ended French rule, Macron's office said, adding that the French leader would instead take part in "symbolic acts" aimed at promoting reconciliation. The atrocities committed by both sides during the 1954-1962 Algerian war of independence continue to strain relations between the two countries six decades later. Macron, the first president born after the colonial period, has gone further than any of his predecessors in recognising French crimes in Algeria. Later Wednesday, a historian commissioned by the president with assessing "the progress made by France on the memory of the colonisation of Algeria and the Algerian war," will submit his findings. - APP

# Spirituality is soul of society: Mirziyoyev

Since we have decided to build a new Uzbekistan, we rely on two strong pillars. The first is a strong economy based on market principles. The second is a strong spirituality based on the rich spiritual heritage of our ancestors and national values

DNA

TASHKENT: A video conference was held on the cardinal improvement of the system of spiritual and educational work, strengthening the interaction of state and public organizations in this process. The meeting was chaired by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev. World historical experience shows that nations make progress thanks to spiritual cohesion, following their national idea. Today the issue of national ideology is very important in our country, which is moving towards building a new life and joining a number of developed states. In recent years, a number of decisions have been made in this direction. It was determined that

the President of the country is the chairman of the Republican Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment. The khokims are responsible for the territorial offices of the council. This further elevated the role of spiritual and educational issues in state policy. "If the economy is an organism that ensures the vital activity of society, then spirituality is its heart and soul," Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted at the meeting. - Since we have decided to build a new Uzbekistan, we rely on two strong pillars. The first is a strong economy based on market principles. The second is a strong spirituality based on the rich spiritual heritage of our ancestors and national values. In the recent Address of the head of state to the Oliy Majlis, at the first Youth Forum of



Uzbekistan and an expanded meeting of the Security Council, urgent tasks in the field of spirituality were identified, since it has accumulated many issues awaiting their solution. Some do not fully understand the essence of the national idea, treat it superficially, mistakenly identifying it with the old ideology. In

this regard, the President named the main essence of the ideology of our country: - The ideology of the new Uzbekistan we are creating will be kindness, humanity, humanism. When we talk about ideology, we mean, first of all, the education of reason, the education of national and universal values. They are based on millennial life ideas and values of our people, the head of state said. As you know, today acute struggle and competition reign in the world, and the clash of interests is intensifying. The processes of globalization bring both unprecedented new opportunities and unforeseen problems for humanity. There are more and more threats and challenges to national identity and spiritual values. Egocentrism, a carefree attitude

to work, family, and consumer culture are being introduced into the consciousness of people, especially young people. Threats such as terrorism, extremism, transnational and cybercrime, human trafficking and drug trafficking are on the rise. In some regions, artificial instability and protest moods are observed. In such an alarming situation, it is necessary to exercise caution and vigilance, to live with the peace and interests of our country in mind. The head of state stressed that the biggest threat is indifference and indifference, in minimizing the social problems observed today, there is not enough participation of the older generation in education, and public control is insufficient.

**Briefs**

**Taliban calls for Islamic system in Afghanistan**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban demanded a total Islamic system in Afghanistan, stating that there is no possibility of reforming the current government, according to the reports. The talks between Afghan Republic's team and the Taliban group resumed negotiations in Doha two weeks ago. However, the two sides have not made any significant progress since the start of the second round of talks. According to the Afghan media, sources familiar with the ongoing peace talks said that the Taliban are not interested in discussing an agenda with the Republic's team and that the group is focused instead on the following issues: The Taliban is demanding the release of their remaining prisoners and the removal of the group's leaders and members from the US Blacklist. The Afghan government has however requested the US not to give in to the Taliban's demands. The Taliban demands a pure Islamic system in Afghanistan, stating that the current government cannot be reformed. The Taliban are also waiting for US President-elect Joe Biden to be inaugurated and to see what his policies regarding the Afghan peace process.

**'Government introducing reforms in civil services'**

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training and head of Cabinet Committee on Institutional Reforms Shafiqat Mahmood has said the government has announced various reforms in civil services to improve performance of government employees and departments. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, the Minister said reforms have been introduced in rules governing the promotion, premature retirement, efficiency and discipline, appointment in MP scale, rotation and about strength of Pakistan Administrative Service. The head of Cabinet Committee on Institutional Reforms said promotion of civil servants will depend on a process involving forty percent share of Annual Confidential Reports, thirty percent training and thirty percent board evaluation. About premature retirement, Shafiqat Mahmood said the FPSC Chairman will decide the cases from BS-20 onwards; the decisions about scales 17 to 19 will be taken by Secretary whereas decision up to 16th scale will be made by a senior joint secretary.

**NAB closes cases against Chaudhry brothers**

DNA

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Wednesday has closed all the inquiries against Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervez Elahi after 20 years. According to details, a two-member bench headed by Justice Sadaqat Ali conducted hearing on a plea of Chaudhry brothers challenging the NAB chairman's authority. During the proceedings, the anti-corruption watchdog prosecutor has told the Lahore High Court (LHC) that all the inquiries against the Chaudhry brothers have been dismissed. Meanwhile, the court has also disposed of the pleas of Chaudhry brothers for being ineffective. Earlier, NAB had submitted details of the assets of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervez Elahi in LHC. NAB stated that Punjab Assembly Speaker did not own even Rs 100 in 1985, he joined politics after taking loan of 7.5 lac rupees.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in a meeting with Ambassador of the UAE to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi. — DNA

**Pak-UAE enjoy a special relation: FM Qureshi**

The UAE Ambassador hailed the strong UAE-Pakistan relations and pledged to work towards further strengthening and diversifying them in all sectors for the benefit of the two countries and their peoples

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has termed Pakistan's relationship with the UAE as a special one. Foreign Minister received the Ambassador of the UAE to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday. Foreign Minister Qureshi paid tribute to late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (May Allah bless his soul) who contributed immensely towards strengthen-

ing bilateral ties between the two countries. He acknowledged that the UAE and its leadership steadfastly stood by Pakistan in its times of need. He stressed that the relationship benefitted from the warm sentiments between the leadership of the two countries, as well as the strong people-to-people linkages rooted in shared faith, values and culture. He added that Pakistan always accorded paramount importance to its long-standing fraternal ties with the UAE. Recalling his successful visit to the UAE in December 2020,

Foreign Minister Qureshi underscored the importance of frequent high-level visits from both sides, which serve to continually provide impetus towards deepening and diversifying bilateral relations. He looked forward to enhanced high-level engagements with the UAE, as soon as the global health situation improved. The Foreign Minister appreciated the UAE's support for Pakistan's Expo 2020 pavilion (to be held in 2021) covering an approximate area of 3,500 sq. meters. The pavilion will exhibit Pakistan's culture, investment

opportunities and tourism potential in the largest exhibition ever staged in the Arab world (190 countries and 25 million people projected to participate). The UAE Ambassador hailed the strong UAE-Pakistan relations and pledged to work towards further strengthening and diversifying them in all sectors for the benefit of the two countries and their peoples. He acknowledged the positive contribution made by Pakistani Diaspora towards the progress and development of the UAE. Ambassador Al Zaabi reaffirmed the UAE's desire to develop bi-

lateral ties with Pakistan on the basis of mutual respect, understanding, and common interests. The UAE is Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East. Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, (UAE-Pakistan Assistance Programme), valuable support was provided to Pakistan in the areas of education, health, energy and infrastructure development. The UAE is home to more than 1.6 million Pakistanis - the second largest Pakistani expatriates' community abroad.

**Pak-China international cooperation yielded fruitful result: White Paper**

DNA

BEIJING: Pak-China international cooperation yielded fruitful result in 2020, says a White Paper issued here. According to Gwadar Pro, the State Council Information Office of China published a White Paper on "China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era". The White Paper includes multi-field international cooperation and frequently mentions Pak-China cooperation in 2020. The paper summarizes China's recent engagement in providing

development assistance and lays out China's strategy and areas of future development assistance. The respects which are also closely concerned by Pakistan, such as debt relief, poverty reduction, infrastructure improvement, energy transformation, and food crisis alleviation, were emphasized in the paper. As per the White Paper, in 2020, China has continued a steady increase in the scale of its international development cooperation, giving high priority to the least developed countries in Asia and Africa and developing

countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. China has held over 4,000 training sessions for officials from participating countries on Belt and Road. For example, on the conference of Pakistan's vision of a new Pakistan, participants of the programs discussed and planned jointly on ways to link CPEC with regional and national initiatives. In terms of infrastructure, China supports Belt and Road participants in infrastructure connectivity projects to revive the ancient Silk Road. To support CPEC and promote overland trade

between the two countries, China participated in the upgrading and expansion of the Peshawar-Karachi Motorway and the Karakoram Highway. To meet the increasing needs of air transport, China has assisted Pakistan in upgrading and expanding our airports, thereby improving operational capacity and safety, increasing the passenger and cargo throughput, promoting local tourism, facilitating cross-border passenger and trade flow, and bringing more opportunities for their integration with the Belt and Road Initiative.

**Swedish envoy visits FPCCI**



ISLAMABAD: Henrik Persson Swedish Ambassador met FPCCI Islamabad Office Head Haji Qurban Ali here in Islamabad, Mirza Abdul Rehman Coordinator FPCCI was also present in the meeting. Bilateral trade issues were discussed in the meeting, FPCCI Head Haji Qurban Ali on behalf of Business Community of Pakistan offer Sweden while meeting with Ambassador of Sweden to invest in CPEC Economic zone and other sectors of trade as Hydrel Power, Minerals, Tourism, Transport and Construction as well. As CPEC is going to be a market for international trade in near future due to major interest of China and while Afghanistan is road link towards central Asian market and we hope Sweden will invest more in different sectors of industry as discussed which will help in overcome poverty issues while creating new jobs, Haji Qurban Ali Added. Haji Qurban Ali Head FPCCI Capital office Islamabad invited H.E. from Sweden Embassy to visit Gilgit Baltistan at their ease and to offer to invest in Hydrel Power especially in the region as well. Ambassador of the Sweden welcome the offer to visit and consider this a gesture of good will from FPCCI Islamabad Head, he also said that Sweden is already working with name of 30 to 40 companies in Pakistan and with the help of BOI we are now feel easy and pleasant to work in the business friendly environment provided by the current government and its policies. — DNA

**NA Speaker supports open ballot polls**

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser on Wednesday supported the suggestion for an open ballot during the upcoming Senate polls in his reply submitted in a presidential reference before the Supreme Court of Pakistan. In his letter, the speaker said that the assembly would support any decision taken by the apex court. "Constitution-making and any amendment in it is the responsibility of the Parliament while the apex court has the right to define it," Asad Qaiser said in his written reply while further commenting that President Arif Alvi has also sought the supreme court's help in defining article 226 of the constitution. The speaker while backing up his arguments in favour of open ballot said that they want transparent Senate polls and it is only possible after the process is held through the open ballot process. "Transparent Senate elections will bring an end to horse-trading," he said while expressing regret that in past allegations of votes being sold out in return for hefty amounts have been reported frequently during the past polls. On January 16, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) opposed the presidential reference seeking opinion of the Supreme Court about holding Senate elections with an open ballot. In its reply submitted with the SC, the ECP has rejected the possibility of holding Senate polls through the open ballot and said that the Senate elections would be held as per the constitution of 1973. Senate polls are defined in article 59, 219 and 224 of the constitution, the ECP reply read. Furthermore as per article 226 all elections under the Constitution, other than those of the PM and the Chief Minister, shall be by secret ballot. — DNA

**NAB distributes Rs 760m among 3000 affectees**

The Chairman said that it is for first time in the history that the NAB has distributed a huge amount of Rs 2.5 billion, recovered from the accused through holding Plea Bargain (PB) within only two years among the affectees

DNA

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Chairman Justice Javed Iqbal said that NAB has been striving hard to ensure complete implementation of rule of law. He stated that it has been among top priorities of the NAB to ensure compensation for looted hard-earned money of all affectees, adding that NAB itself doesn't believe in projection of any act. He expressed these views during his address after distributing cheques worth Rs 760 million among 3,000 affectees of Model Housing Enclave Project and

Ferozpur Housing Society. The Chairman said that it is for first time in the history that the NAB has distributed a huge amount of Rs 2.5 billion, recovered from the accused through holding Plea Bargain (PB) within only two years among the affectees in any single Housing Society Scandal. He said that some elements tried to hatch propaganda against the NAB but the Bureau despite of such propagandas would continue to work completely on merit, adding that criticism only for sake of criticism is not justified as there should always be constructive criticism for improvement.

He said that NAB itself has to undergo accountability process as soon as arresting an accused, which is being produced before the court where on the basis of evidences, the remand is being granted. He added that in the cases pertaining to white collar crimes, the court doesn't issue 90-day remand, simultaneously but the remand is granted after production of satisfactory evidences in the court. Appreciating the performance of NAB Lahore under the supervision of DG NAB Lahore, the Justice Javed Iqbal said that distribution of millions of rupees among affectees, after recovering from

the culprits in short span of merely two years is laudable. He said that the joy and happiness at the faces of affectees has proved that NAB Officers and officials are serving the Nation by utilizing their energies for returning hard earned money to the affectees, adding that, during last two years, another amount of Rs1.32 billion is also returned to the affectees of other housing society namely Model Housing Enclave is also a pride for NAB Lahore. Regarding the complaints of business community, the Chairman NAB said that no businessman in the country, ever, had to face problems due to NAB, adding that the

stock exchange could not make a positive trend if the NAB is creating problems for business community. He said that the difference between NAB's custody and judicial custody should be understood as it was also highly propagated about alleged deaths in NAB's custody which is not so. The NAB has put in place special measures to eliminate corruption from mother land without any discrimination and such steps would remain continue, he maintained. Earlier, during his visit to NAB Lahore, the Combined Investigations Teams (CITs) led by DG NAB Lahore briefed him pertaining to the mega corruption cases.

**Partial lockdown in Beijing**

DNA

BEIJING: 1.6 million residents were banned from leaving Beijing on Wednesday as two Covid-19 cases linked to a new UK virus variant were found in the Chinese capital. China has lauded its response to the pandemic, which emerged in the central city of Wuhan just over a year ago but has been broadly brought to heel, officially killing fewer than 5,000 Chinese people. Authorities have been swift to stamp out local clusters of cases with lockdowns, mass testing regimes and travel restrictions. With the Lunar New Year Holiday looming, officials had been keen to avoid an outbreak in Beijing, the heart of political power. But a handful of cases have been detected in the capital in recent days, with six more reported Wednesday in southern Daxing district. Officials said that the two cases in Daxing were linked to a UK variant believed to be a more transmissible form of the virus and were first detected on Sunday. The cases had "no genetic correlation with previously reported local cases and imported cases in Beijing", the head of the Beijing health authority Pang Xing-huo told reporters, but are "considered to be variants of the new coronavirus discovered in the UK."

**PDM rally outside ECP a failed show: Firdous Ashiq**

DNA

LAHORE: Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Information and Broadcasting Firdous Ashiq Awan on Wednesday said that rally by Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) outside Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was a failed show. Firdous Ashiq, in a tweet, said that despite no hurdles by the government and free hand, the opposition alliance failed to gather large number of people and there are more customers in Sahulat Bazars set by Chief Minister Usman Buzdar. The CM's aide also asked Maryam Nawaz to reveal details about owners of the 76 foreign properties after verdict of London High Court. Earlier, federal ministers termed Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM's) rally in front of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as failed show and thanked people for rejecting opposition. Speaking at a press conference with the Cabinet Committee in Islamabad, Shibli Faraz said that the leaders of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) were on the hunt for NRO. He said that both major political parties of Pakistan looted the country and made properties. The Broadsheet decision contains evidence of 20 years of corruption, and a committee has been formed to investigate. The committee includes former judges, FIA officers, senior lawyers and the attorney general.

**Trump says he 'will be back in some form'**

MARYLAND: US President Donald Trump left Washington on Wednesday just three hours ahead of the inauguration of his successor Joe Biden, saying it had been an "incredible four years" and promising to be "back in some form." "I just want to say goodbye but hopefully it's not a long-term goodbye," Trump said in remarks to reporters at the White House before he and First Lady Melania Trump walked a short red carpet and boarded Marine One for the helicopter ride to Joint Base Andrews. Speaking to a small crowd of supporters, staff and family members at Andrews after a 21-gun salute and a serenade of "Hail to the Chief," Trump said "this has been an incredible four years." "We've accomplished so much together," he said. "I will always fight for you. "It is my greatest honor and privilege to have been your president," he said. "We will be back in some form."